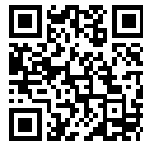

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*Life of Mary Cherubina Clare
of st. Francis, tr. by lady Herbert*

Maria Saraceni



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R. Washbourne, 18 Paternoster Row, London.

MARY CHERUBINA CLARE OF ST. FRANCIS.

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LIFE
OF
MARY CHERUBINA CLARE
OF ST. FRANCIS,
(IN THE WORLD) MARY OF THE CONCEPTION SARACENI,
A PROFESSED RELIGIOUS IN THE
MONASTERY OF ST. CLARE OF ASSISI.

Translated from the Italian.

WITH A PREFACE BY LADY HERBERT.



London:
R. WASHBOURNE, 18 PATERNOSTER ROW.
1874.

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PREFACE.

IN all ages of the Church, in times of peculiar trial, God raises up certain chosen souls, mostly in humble positions or hidden from the world in austere Religious Orders, to whom He communicates Himself in a special manner, in order that they may offer themselves up as victims for the sins of the world around them, and by their sufferings and intercessions appease the Divine wrath and save the souls of those for whom they plead.

Such a victim was the Sister whose life we now present to our readers in an English form. Born in Rome on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, her birth was signalised by various indications of the high sanctity which she was destined hereafter to attain. Her nurse, who was a woman of eminent piety, and who held her at the baptismal font,

declared that, during all the time of the service, it seemed to her that she had no ordinary babe in her arms, but a special treasure—while an internal voice went on repeating to her, “This infant will be a saintly Religious.”

In the same way, when, after a Retreat at the “Maestrê Pie,” she made her First Communion, the Cardinal who administered to her the Bread of Life was so struck by her absorption in God and her overwhelming sense of the greatness of the act she had just performed, that he turned to her mother and said: “Guard this child jealously, and one day you will see what she will become.”

It was from this moment that she determined to devote herself entirely to the service of God in whatever way He might appoint. Her life henceforth might be said to be one of continual preparation for the religious state she had determined to embrace. She met, as usual, with all the contradictions, trials, and temptations, whereby our Lord is pleased to try the fidelity of His spouses. But in the end, her constancy triumphed over all opposition, and in the month of May, 1845, she entered the

Order of Poor Clares, in the Convent of St. Clare at Assisi.

We do not wish to anticipate the interest of this biography by dwelling more minutely in our preface on the details of this wonderful life, and the working of God's grace in a soul which He had wounded (like that of St. Teresa) with a dart of His Divine love.

If her sufferings were extraordinary, so also were her consolations; and both were heightened by her extraordinary humility, which contrived, by a thousand ingenious devices, to hide from all human eyes the wonderful favours she received from God.

There was one class of sinners for whom Sister Mary Cherubina Clare was inspired to plead in a special manner: and that was for unworthy priests. Strange and startling were the revelations she received with regard to them, and superhuman her efforts to rescue them from the abyss on the brink of which they were standing. At last, her life of heroic suffering for souls was closed: she died in 1871; and numberless miracles attest to the merits of those sufferings and the singular graces they called down from God.

But it is not only to make known to our English readers the heroic life and death of this holy woman—a life which, like that of the martyrs in China and Japan at this very moment, has been going on in these our days of luxury and self-indulgence, although we knew it not—that we have published this little book; but that we may enlist their sympathies on behalf of the Convent where nearly a quarter of a century of that wonderful life was passed: and of the Community whom she so greatly edified by her virtues. Since the Italian Government took possession of the States of the Church and confiscated all the property of the Religious Orders, the trials and sufferings of these poor nuns have been extreme. Their nominal pension allowed by the Government (in exchange for having simply robbed them of their respective fortunes), is about sevenpence a day; and even this miserable pittance is only paid for a certain number of the nuns, and that irregularly. In addition to this, two other Communities have been forcibly driven out of their Convents and compelled to take refuge within the walls of St. Clare. Among these are the Benedic-

tines of Assisi, who are twenty-two in number. Although the Convent of St. Clare appears large outside, it is badly built within, and was only intended to accommodate between thirty and forty people: now that these three Communities have been compelled to live together, upwards of sixty-two persons have been crowded into this space; so that they are obliged to put four or five Sisters into each cell. Their supply of water, which was barely sufficient for the ordinary wants of the Poor Clares, is utterly inadequate for treble their number: add to this, that the pension allowed by the Government is miserably insufficient, that the price of every kind of provisions and clothes is exorbitant, and nearly quadrupled in the last six years; and we can form an idea of the numberless privations and, in fact, the positive misery of these poor nuns at this moment. We have not spoken of another hardship entailed upon them by these arbitrary measures on the part of the Italian Government—we mean the clubbing together of different Religious Orders, whose office, and the spirit of whose rule being quite different, they have been compelled still

further to diminish their space by dividing off separate Choirs, parlours, and refectories for their use; so that the Poor Clares themselves are reduced to living in a real prison, where they have scarcely room to turn. Were it not for the alms which have been collected and sent to them in the last year or two from various parts of Italy and France, these admirable religious would simply have died of hunger. It is for their benefit, therefore, that this book has been translated, and all the profits accruing from it will be placed at their disposal. We earnestly entreat, then, all English Convents, as well as Catholics in general, to purchase a few copies: they will find in this edifying life the noblest example of heroic virtue: and to those to whom is entrusted the forming of young souls for the religious life, the most valuable assistance, in the precepts and instructions given by this holy nun, who was so long a Novice Mistress in her own Community; and whose golden words remain on record to guide others in the like anxious charge. To priests, also, we would appeal in the like manner; feeling sure that her burning entreaties to them to

save the Church of God by an increase of fervour, and especially in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, will find an echo in the hearts of all on whom the solemn Imposition of Hands has fallen. To each one among us this life must form a source of edification and spiritual help. May all who have contributed to make it more widely known be assisted by her prayers before the throne of God, so that they may daily increase in those virtues of faith, of charity, and above all, of humility, which were so dear to her heart: and by striving for the same intense realisation of the Presence of God attain to a like sanctity and a like reward.

N.B.—Subscriptions in aid of this suffering community at Assisi may be sent to the Lady Herbert, 38, Chesham Place, London.

INTRODUCTION.

A MISERABLE creature, and an unworthy servant of Jesus, who do not merit to be numbered among the daughters of Saint Clare, and still less to occupy the place of so illustrious a Mother, have received from our Lord the signal favour of having had for my Vicaress, Mary Cherubina Clare of Saint Francis, a religious of eminent sanctity. This dear Sister edified me by the example of all virtues carried to an heroic degree, so far as I am capable of judging, during the whole time that she lived in our venerable Monastery, but especially during the last eighteen years that she was Vicaress.

I shall speak of her gift of prayer, and of sublime contemplation, and of the instructions I received from her when she was absorbed in God. So great was her humility, that she sought, by every means in her power, to conceal the extraordinary favours she received from our Lord, and every week she asked of

her Confessor the blessing of obedience, that all these things might remain hidden. And so, in fact, it happened; for she was unknown to all, save her Superior. Many times have I seen her deprived of all feeling, and passing whole hours as if dead. I approached her to assure myself that she still lived; but she was unconscious of my presence. Her breathing was imperceptible; her pulse no longer seemed to beat; her face was cadaverous, and her whole body stiff and icy. Then I would recall her to herself by the voice of obedience, saying, "Mother Vicaress, if it be the good pleasure of God, come back to yourself." These words were hardly pronounced (and sometimes I only addressed her mentally), when, with a profound sigh, she would come to herself, and begin to tremble and, as it were, to struggle with herself, saying, "My suffering is so great, I cannot explain it!" If on these occasions I entreated our Lord to put an end to such a painful state, I used to see her senses gradually restored, but she herself reduced to an extremity of exhaustion and weakness. Even after this, if I left her to herself, the ecstasy was renewed, and she became again like a statue; and I, miserable creature, could only adore the Almighty, who found His delight with His dear spouse. What God wrought at these times in my own poor soul is known to Him alone. I cannot explain it. Very often after she had retired to her cell

for the night, she would come to me and ask for a blessing to enable her, as she said, to resist a force superior to her weakness ; and I, notwithstanding my misery, blessed her. Then, in her lively faith, she would go away, saying that she experienced a real help from this blessing. If, moreover, I told her to sleep the whole night, if it were the Will of God, in the morning she would assure me that she had had a good night's rest. At times her conversation was incoherent, and I would say to her, "Mother Vicaress, how are you?" To which her reply would be: "The Almighty draws me powerfully to Himself; and, alas, what suffering it is to be still obliged to converse with creatures!" At these times, if I felt inspired to do so, I tried to keep up a conversation with her about God, that I might have the benefit of her answers. She, on her part, spoke, as it were, unconsciously. . . . Yes, truly, then it was that I heard words from Paradise! But so sublime were they that I must acknowledge myself quite unable to repeat them, save, perhaps, a few:—"Ah, Mother, in the Divinity what can we ever know?" Thus it was she generally began. "Tell me something, at least," I replied. To which she answered, "Only God Himself can make this known." At these words, wrapt in ecstasy, she would seize my hand, and seem to wish to transport me elsewhere, while, with eyes

raised to heaven, she would exclaim, "Why do we not satisfy the loving desires of our God! He requires very little from us—only fidelity to the promises made at our baptism, and at our holy Religious Profession. . . . Oh, this word religious! how little is it thought of! A religious means one who belongs no more to earth, because we are on earth only as long as God so wills, but we should live as though we were no longer there. . . . Ah, it is from God we learn how a religious ought to live. Little, indeed, is required to satisfy the Divine wishes." I asked her what we had to do to please God, and she answered: "We must act always and in all things in union with Jesus, and as if we saw Him; for, in truth, Jesus Christ is always near His spouse when she is faithful. I see that it is indeed so, for although we do not feel Him, He is always with us, who are His spouses, and He contemplates us with joy. Mother, He is here, near us! oh, why not seek to please Him?"

In the following Biography, we shall see how this faithful spouse of Jesus sought, during her whole life, to please her Sweet and Heavenly Bridegroom.

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ALL FOR THE GREATEST GLORY OF GOD OUR DIVINE SPOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

*Birth of Sister Mary Cherubina Clare and her Life
in the World.*

SISTER Mary Cherubina Clare was born in the holy city of Rome, on the 8th of December, 1823, between three and four o'clock in the morning. Her parents, James Saraceni and Margaret Faggi, were both of respectable condition and irreproachable lives. The circumstances which attended her birth showed that God had special designs over her, and gave reason to conjecture that she would be a soul of no ordinary virtue.

One day, shortly before the birth of her daughter, Madam Saraceni received a visit from her aged

father, Philip Faggi, whose piety had won for him, among his neighbours, the appellation of "Philip, the sayer of Pater Nosters." When he took his leave Madame Saraceni accompanied him to the foot of the stairs and asked his paternal benediction. "Yes," replied the old man, "I bless you, but I bless especially the child whom you will soon give to the world. I bless it with all the affection of my heart."

The child had to suffer from poverty from the very beginning of her existence, for although her father went to every house in the neighbourhood to find some one to assist at her birth, all excused themselves, and the nurse was obliged to put a sheet on the floor and let the dear little one lie there alone while she attended to the poor mother. Her baptism, which took place in the Parish Church of "St. Maria in Via Lata," was not less poor, for, as no one would accompany the nurse to the Church, she and the parish priest had to perform all the ceremonies alone: there was neither godfather nor godmother. The name of Mary of the Conception was given to the infant because she was born and baptised on the day consecrated to the Immaculate Conception of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. When the nurse, who was a person of great piety, returned from the

Church, she placed the child in its mother's arms, saying these remarkable words : "Madame Margaret, I cannot tell you why, but the whole time of the ceremony it seemed to me that I was holding no ordinary child, but a treasure ; and an interior voice seemed to say to me, ' You are holding in your arms one who will become a most holy religious.' "

When Mary of the Conception had reached her eleventh year she was allowed to make her First Communion ; and such was the celestial sweetness which filled her soul at this moment that she could not restrain her tears. She prepared herself for this great action with extraordinary fervour, particularly in the retreat, which, to her great satisfaction, she was allowed to make at the convent of the "Maestrè Pie." I have forgotten the name of the Cardinal from whose hands she received our Lord for the first time ; but as soon as the ceremony was over, this Prince of the Church, who had seen this angelic child so deeply impressed with the sublime act in which she was engaged, and so absorbed in God, turned to one of these good religious, or to her mother, saying, "Take special care of this child ; some day you will see what she will be !" It was at this happy time that she determined to consecrate

herself entirely to God; indeed she would have wished to remain with those good sisters without ever returning home.

The life led by our little Mary in the world may be called a constant preparation for the religious life; that is to say, a life of sacrifice, of retirement, and of toil, yet delighting in prayer and spiritual reading. Her favourite book was the "Imitation of Christ," which she took up in all her spare moments. She shunned all society, so that persons often complained that they could never find an opportunity of saying two words to her. The short walk from her own dwelling to that of a pious friend with whom she worked, and the equally short one to Church, were always made in haste, and with the greatest recollection. Her habit of wearing dark colours had become quite a proverb. But God wished to try His spouse and to give her the opportunity of gaining the admirable virtue of patience. He therefore allowed her father to be the cause of much suffering to her; for he treated her with harshness and even contempt, and never had a kind word for her, although she made the greatest sacrifices in order to please him. But Mary, whose virtue was above her years, suffered all in silence, and it is only since her

death that many of these circumstances have become known.

In consequence of her habit of praying always near her poor bed, there was a mark made upon the wall, which remained for a long time—a silent witness of her love of prayer. She always entertained a horror for every kind of amusement. Only once was she prevailed upon, after much resistance on her part, to be present at a ball in the Doria Palace where she lived; but this was a subject of bitter regret to her for a long time afterwards. On one occasion she was taken to a theatre, in spite of her repugnance; but as soon as she heard the music she raised her mind and heart to God so effectually that she was unconscious of all that was going on around her. One who was her intimate friend assures us that whenever it was possible, Mary always tried to make the conversation turn on spiritual things; and, although there were several young girls employed in the work-room with her, she was so united to God that she knew nothing of what they were talking about.

Full of love for God and of contempt for herself, she practised many penances: as, for instance, fasting on bread and water the eve of our Blessed Lady's

feasts ; and this she did so cleverly that generally it passed unobserved by her family. All her penances were self-imposed, for, as, at that time, she did not know how much obedience enhances the merit of good works, she kept them concealed even from her confessor. Her pious friend Anna, to whom we have already alluded, tells us that Mary let her know in strict confidence that her confessor, the Rev. Father Achilluzzi, of the Society of Jesus, desired her to communicate every day. She did not, however, wish this favour to be known even to her parents, although her mother was a woman of such eminent piety that many persons, and even priests, held her in great esteem, and recommended themselves to her prayers. This reserve was particularly difficult, as her mother often accompanied her to Mass. She, however, succeeded so well that her secret remained hidden until Anna herself revealed it to Madame Saraceni. As our angelic child studied to conceal from the eyes of all the graces granted to her by her Divine Spouse, so did she seek to live uncared for and unknown. We have a very striking proof of this in the following incident. She was greatly beloved by one of her aunts, who, not having any children of her own, wished to adopt her niece ; neither prayers, nor

entreaties, nor promises, however, could avail to overcome the opposition of the young girl to this proposal; whereby she contrived to withdraw herself from what would have increased her fortune and position in this world, thus testifying her contempt for every kind of luxury and riches. Her thoughts were always directed towards God, and much taken up with her project of consecrating herself to Him. She preserved this treasure of a religious vocation with jealous care, and burned with an ardent desire of seeing it soon realised. But the Rev. Father Achilluzzi expressly forbade her to mention the subject to him again, until he should himself open the way for it; adding that he should consider any disobedience on her part to this injunction, as a proof that her fancied vocation was a delusion.

The humble girl submitted without reply, abandoning herself then, as she did during the whole course of her after life, to the care of Divine Providence; and at length the moment so ardently longed for came, when she was to be allowed to bid a final farewell to the world. Notwithstanding, however, the strength of her desire, our Lord, wishing to make her sacrifice more meritorious, permitted her to feel most keenly the separation from her country, the holy city

(the place of her birth), and her family. It seemed as if her heart must break; and above all, when she had to tear herself away from her tender mother, whom she loved so much, and to whom she was so dear, nature seemed ready to sink under the trial; but her love for God, Who was so powerfully attracting her to Himself, at length triumphed, and offering herself to Him as a perfect holocaust, she performed her journey in profound peace and tranquillity of soul.

CHAPTER II.

She enters the venerable Monastery of St. Clare at Assisi.



MARY of the Conception Saraceni entered our venerable Monastery on the 19th of May, 1845. When she arrived, our Confessor was at the door of the enclosure to give her the blessing, according to our custom, and the nuns were also waiting there to welcome her to her new home. Quite overcome with joy, her cheeks bathed in tears, she prostrated herself on the threshold, and said to God in her heart : “Behold me here, O Lord ; I am all Thine, I belong no more to the world, I belong no more to my parents. Farewell to all my relations ; St. Francis is my father, St. Clare is my mother, these religious are my sisters. Ah ! Jesus, my Spouse, do with me what Thou wilt, I am all Thine.” In relating these details to me afterwards, she added : “ I thought myself already in paradise ; it seemed to me that I belonged

no more to the earth. Oh, the happiness of that moment!"

Now at length she was in the sacred enclosure, determined to lead a holy life, and that of a faithful imitator of our glorious Mother St. Clare. She entered on her new career with a joy not to be expressed. "Yes," she said, "I am supremely happy, for my only desire is to love God, and to suffer for Him and for my neighbour." She began her year of probation with the firm resolution of becoming a saint. She asked as a great grace of her Novice, Mistress, Sister Mary Veronica dei Marchesi Sperelli, a most holy religious, that she would make her renounce her own will in everything. From the very beginning she opened her whole soul to the Father Confessor, and to the Mistress of Novices, in order that she might have the merit of obedience in all she did. Her Mistress, who was thoroughly experienced in her office, sought to mortify the young novice in everything: in her food, by making her leave a portion of what she naturally liked, and take what was disagreeable to her; in her clothing, by making her put on, even on the greatest solemnities, the garments of a lay-novice, and go thus clothed to Holy Communion. However, this excellent girl always sub-

mited with joy, as if these things had been quite agreeable to her : and when asked if she did not feel any repugnance to these mortifications, she answered, "It is enough for me to obey, I desire nothing more." Sometimes the Novice Mistress would correct and find fault with her without cause ; but the humble novice never lost her peaceful serenity, listening to all that was said with humility and in silence, as if she had been guilty of serious faults.

She would frequently entreat her Mistress to correct and mortify her every time she failed in her duty, without any regard, as she said, to her pride and self-love. Her Mistress embraced this opportunity of making her fervent disciple advance with giant steps in the way of perfection.

This same Mistress said to me one day, "I can assure you that our three novices are a constant source of edification to me" (there were at this time two other novices in the Noviciate with Mary of the Conception, a lay-sister, who died about four years ago, and a choir novice, who, nineteen days after the death of the servant of God, succeeded her in the office of Vicarress, as we shall see later), "but I should like to have twenty such novices as Mary Saraceni. I find in her all that can be desired ; a

true vocation and a solid foundation of religious virtue; she is thoroughly formed and well instructed in everything. I need never rouse her to perform heroic acts; but, on the contrary, I must keep her back to prevent her ruining her health by the vehemence of that Divine Love with which she is so ardently inflamed, and by her great attraction for penance." She was naturally droll and gay, even playful, and used often to amuse her Mistress and her companions at recreation, without ever exceeding the bounds of moderation.

It is customary for the novices to be dispensed, the first few days after their entrance, from rising as early as the community; but hardly had Mary of the Conception heard the signal than immediately she arose and went to choir with the other sisters, and during her whole religious life she never failed to be present at all community exercises, unless prevented by a lawful impediment, or by serious illness. The same punctuality was observed by her in all the duties of the Noviciate during the whole time of her probation. Mary of the Conception finished her first year in so satisfactory a manner that the community unanimously decided to give her the holy habits. However, as her two companions had not completed

their year of probation, she was obliged to wait for three months longer. She patiently resigned herself to the Divine Will in this as in all else, saying, "My Divine Spouse sees very well that I am not sufficiently prepared to receive this holy habit, which is to be the exterior mark of my being His spouse; may His holy Will be done."

During these three months she redoubled her prayers. It really did one good to see her in choir during the time of mental prayer; she was then altogether absorbed in God. At this period I was a simple religious, and Mary of the Conception was next to me in choir. I had therefore the opportunity of often watching her. She remained on her knees immovable like a statue, and when the meditation was finished she performed with the greatest exactitude whatever still remained to be done in choir; she then left with the others, and appeared as bright and cheerful as if she had just come from recreation. The Novice Mistress often asked her how she passed the time in choir; to this she would make answer, notwithstanding her repugnance, in these terms: "I sometimes find it impossible to recollect myself, then I remember that I am in the midst of so many holy souls, spouses of Jesus Christ, and that soon, notwith-

standing my unworthiness, I shall have this same happiness. I then contemplate the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and it seems to me that He is inviting me to enter in and take up my abode there. Ah! it is impossible for me to describe what I feel in my soul!" Then she would add, with ingenuous simplicity, believing that all the religious were equally absorbed in God all the time they were in choir, "but you, my mother, understand it, although I cannot explain it, because, like all the other sisters, you experience it yourself."

At length the long-wished-for day drew near: the clothing was fixed for the 12th of August, the feast of our glorious Mother St. Clare, in the year 1846. According to our custom the crucifix was suspended to the shoulder of the novice several days before the clothing by the Rev. Father Confessor Canon D. Joseph Morichelli, now dead. As soon as this venerable ecclesiastic had intoned the "Veni Creator Spiritus," which was taken up by the religious in alternate choirs, Mary burst into tears, which continued to flow during the sermon and the whole time of the ceremony. The real motive of these tears was only known afterwards, and this is how she expressed herself when questioned upon the subject: "It seemed to me that my most sweet Jesus gave Himself to me

as a loving Spouse, but a Crucified One ; I felt myself invited to love Him, and to remain nailed to the Cross with Him. Oh, those moments ! I then understood what the true spouse of a Crucified God ought to be. The tears that I had already shed seemed to me as nothing compared to those I ought to shed during my whole life, to keep company with my Divine Crucified Spouse. To see the Divine Redeemer hanging Crucified on my shoulder ! Oh, from that instant I understood the obligation of saving souls ! Oh, what would I have not done in those moments when Jesus was making Himself known to my soul ! I cannot explain myself further."

During the eight days' retreat that preceded the clothing, her voice was never heard in the community ; she only spoke to her Confessor and to the Novice Mistress. Her recollection was quite heavenly, and she remained for hours bathed in tears of joy. In her humility she asked permission of the Novice Mistress to make a general confession : she said she required to do so before being clothed with the habit of the Seraphic Order. In the meantime she told everything to her Mistress before making her confession : and it seemed to this good religious that her spiritual child was an angel of innocence rather

than a human creature, so truly did this recital edify her.

The nearer the happy day drew near the more earnestly did Mary of the Conception try to adorn her soul with every virtue, and especially did she multiply her acts of humility. Her two companions were edified by her exterior, but her interior was hidden from them. On the 10th of August, having finished her general confession, she withdrew to her cell, and wrote down the resolutions made during the course of the retreat. We find them in her own handwriting as follows:—

1. I promise my Divine Spouse to work hard to acquire a knowledge of myself and of my evil inclinations, especially my self-love; and I shall seek rather to be humbled than esteemed.

2. I promise to be obedient, not through human respect, but solely to please God.

3. During the year of my Noviciate I will never allow myself to stop long with professed religious, unless through necessity, and I will speak little even when I am spoken to.

4. I will try to be as much alone as possible; I will love solitude that I may hear the voice of God speaking to my heart.

5. I will never give up mental prayer without grave necessity, and I will cultivate a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to St. Joseph.

6. I will do all with an upright intention to please God, my Beloved Spouse.

7. I will always keep myself in the presence of God who encompasses me.

8. I will be open with my Confessor, and docile in obeying him in all things.

9. I will never speak of my family, nor of my native place, without necessity.

10. I will never neglect the ordinary prayers, nor any Community exercise, on account of aridity or temptation.

11. I will detach myself from all creatures, particularly from those for whom I feel a special inclination ; but I will love all alike.

12. I will give an account of all that passes in my soul to the Father Confessor and to Mother Abbess, in spite of any repugnance I may feel in doing so.

With the help of God I hope to be faithful in keeping these resolutions, made at the sacred feet of Jesus, and with this view I will renew my intention every morning.

The novices concluded their retreat on the 10th, that they might be free to help the Community the next day in getting everything ready for the solemn feast of our glorious Mother, St. Clare. When their Mistress called them they all hastened to obey, but it was easy to see that Mary had to do violence to herself in order to conceal what was passing within her, so powerfully was her Divine Spouse drawing her to Himself. I happened to be present, and remember perfectly well how absorbed she seemed, although an air of joy and of holy indifference shone upon her countenance. As soon as she had done what was enjoined her by obedience, she begged her Mistress to allow her to return to her cell, and the permission being granted she hastened back to give free vent to her feelings. There, prostrate on the ground, her tears flowed in such abundance that words were impossible to her.

Thus she passed the entire day almost without food. Toward evening she returned to the confessional that her soul might be again purified by sacramental absolution; she told her Confessor that she feared being unable to restrain herself the next day during the ceremony, for her heart was overflowing with sweetness. He therefore gave her the blessing of holy

obedience, that she might not fail in attention to all that would be required of her, and Mary left the confessional full of faith in the strength of obedience.

She was up nearly all night, for it was impossible for her to remain in bed ; her prayer was almost uninterrupted. She felt her heart rebounding as it were in her breast ; tears were her only relief, and thus the night was spent in prayers and tears until the morning dawned which was to witness the realisation of her fondest hopes.

CHAPTER III.

Mary of the Conception is Clothed in the Habit of a Poor Clare.

THE moment so ardently sighed for at length arrived, when Mary was to bid adieu to the world, and all that is of the world. The new spouses of Jesus Christ tried to perfect their preparation by an increased recollection, but Mary surpassed her companions in fervour. The venerable Bishop of Assisi, M^{gr}. Louis Landi Vittori, gave Holy Communion to the three postulants, and then vested to assist at the solemn Mass sung by one of the canons of the cathedral. Mary, absorbed in God, remained like a statue, without moving, till the end of Mass, when his lordship approached the grate to begin the ceremony of the clothing. Mary was the first to receive the holy habit. I was at her side, assisting to take off her bridal dress; she appeared as in a trance, with a joy, devotion, and modesty truly worthy of a spouse

of Jesus Christ. I saw with what delight and promptitude she divested herself of the vain ornaments of the world, and I admired the earnest devotion with which she put on the habit of St. Clare. She had scarcely received it, when she seemed almost beside herself. I was quite afraid of disturbing her, but I was obliged to arrange her veil and cord properly. When the bishop placed the crown upon her head she burst into tears, which continued to flow sweetly all the time her two companions were being clothed. According to custom, the name received in baptism was changed, and that of Sister Mary Cherubina Clare of St. Francis was given to her. His lordship then made a most eloquent and touching address to the three novices, and the ceremony was concluded with the "Te Deum." It seemed as though our dear novice were in heaven, singing with the holy angels. She has since said that the moment the bishop gave her the crucifix, she pressed it to her bosom, and felt her soul unite itself to Jesus Christ with such interior sweetness, that never before had she experienced anything like it; her heart was at that moment so forcibly drawn towards Jesus her Divine Spouse, that, bursting into a torrent of most sweet tears, she exclaimed interiorly, "I will be always and

entirely Thine, my Jesus ; I will have nothing but Thyself and Thy Divine Will." She asked the Mistress of Novices to allow her to spend in her cell the three days during which the new spouses of Jesus are accustomed to wear the crown which they receive at their clothing, in order that she might thank our Lord for the great grace He had just bestowed upon her, and pour forth her heart before that Jesus who made her feel so profoundly His infinite sweetness. But she had to conform to custom, and, together with her two companions, to go to the grate during these three days. She was so perfectly obedient, that this contradiction seemed to cost her nothing, and she appeared just as happy and cheerful as if she were there by her own choice. But her heart was all absorbed in God. And as she went about, she went on repeating, " Oh, what a consolation to see myself clothed in these nuptial garments ! Oh, this crown ; how it makes me think of that which Jesus, my Heavenly Spouse, will one day place upon my head ! "

She passed these three days almost without food, and what she took was only in obedience to her mistress. Her two companions were as much edified as they were astonished by all they witnessed ; they dared not question her about what was passing in her

soul ; only they used to say, " What a source of edification she is to us ! and how is it that she does not animate us to the practice of more religious virtues ! " We may add that that which she seemed more than all to take to heart was a most exact dependence upon her spiritual guide, which is the perfection of a good religious. When in the world, it must be admitted that she had been very much wanting in this respect ; for, as she afterwards told me, beyond the bare accusation of even the slightest failings, she never said a word to her Confessor, either of her spiritual consolations, of her intimate communications with God, or even of her mortifications ; it was enough for her that her conscience was at rest. However, learning afterwards from the Father Confessor that she ought not to direct herself, but to give an exact account of what passed in her soul, even every week, if it were required of her, she obeyed most perfectly, revealing even all that had happened in her past life ; and ever after she was most scrupulous never to conceal anything whatever, whether good or bad, that concerned her soul ; nor did she fail in this point during the rest of her life, although our Confessor was frequently changed. Speaking on this subject, she would say, " I always see God in my spiritual

guide, and thus, although he may be often changed, I never change my opinion, unless this change be required of me by the Father Confessor himself." In the Noviciate she renewed the act she had made on the day of her reception: that is to say, she put herself in the hands of the Novice Mistress, Sister Mary Philomena Giovannini, who succeeded Sister Mary Veronica Sperelli, in the charge of the novices, and begged her second mistress to do with her what she pleased, without considering her self-love; for she wished to be in her hands as one dead, having no other desire than that of perfectly fulfilling her duties, that she might be well prepared for her holy profession. Sister Mary Philomena told me that Mary of the Conception was always so perfectly resigned to her will, that she never offered the least opposition to anything that was required of her; and she had such a cheerful, pleasant way of obeying, that she never showed whether she liked or disliked what she had to do. So perfect was she in the virtue of obedience, even during her noviciate, that never, if it were possible, would she do the least thing without asking an express permission. Sister Mary Philomena would often impose public humiliations upon her novices to make them renounce themselves; Sister

Mary Cherubina Clare was always foremost to obey, but she acted with so much ease, that she seemed to be doing something naturally agreeable to her, though it often happened that the things commanded were diametrically opposed to that timidity which her education had made, as it were, natural to her ; yet she did everything with scrupulous exactitude. One day she was told to present her hand to be kissed by all the religious who were seated in the refectory. She immediately obeyed with the greatest ease, beginning with the eldest, a religious in her eightieth year, and going down to the last of the lay-sisters ; but it cost her much to present her hand to her Novice Mistress. On another occasion, when the religious were assembled in recreation, she was told to say that when she was professed, she hoped to be first Novice-Mistress, and then Abbess ; this she did with characteristic gaiety. She showed the same exact and cheerful obedience to the orders given to the novices in general as to those which regarded herself in particular, and was always most zealous for all the common work of the Community, relinquishing readily her own spiritual satisfaction at the call of obedience. Although she had a remarkable attraction for prayer, she always made her private devotions give way to

obedience, saying that "she was more sure of doing the Will of God" when she obeyed; but all her free time she spent in prayer. This did not suffice, however, to satisfy her fervour; and as she was not allowed to rise for prayer at night, she knelt upon her bed, and there, without failing in obedience, gave free scope to her love.* Thus she was always a subject of edification, and a bright example to every one. Her humility, charity, and exactitude in religious observances were most edifying. In her humility she esteemed herself the most vile and most imperfect of all the novices, and honestly thought her companions fit for everything. She sought, therefore, to learn some fresh virtue from each one, while she was very clever in finding out new methods of humbling herself, and was always begging her sisters to warn her of her faults, that she might correct them. Never did she seem at all troubled or disturbed when told of her failings, so that her mistress could act quite freely with her. She was never heard to complain of any one; on the contrary, her charity excused the faults of all. She took care to speak only of spiritual things, and if she heard things con-

* We suppose that though the novices were not allowed to leave their beds for prayer, they were not forbidden to remain awake to pray.—*Note of the Translator.*


nected with the world talked of, even though they were quite innocent, she would warn her companions in her sweet winning way; and thus the conversation would be changed.

During her noviciate she made the holy rule her constant study, that she might be able to practise it faithfully after her profession: and, in truth, we must say that she observed it most perfectly all her life. And if she were so perfect in other virtues she was certainly not less so in the exercise of the love of God; it was even easy to see that all the rest had their root in this holy love; God gave evident signs of this to her Novice Mistress, as I have learned from Sister Philomena herself. I will give her own words: "The devil sometimes troubled her during her noviciate with thoughts about her good mother whom she had left; she seemed to hear her voice telling her to come back; he also suggested to her the fear of not being faithful to her holy rule, by which conduct she would be lost; but she overcame all his temptations by having recourse to holy obedience, and by manifesting her whole interior life, as also her exterior, with the simplicity of a child. She was always grateful, to God in the first place, and then to the Community,

for having admitted her into our Lord's house. Several times a day she thanked God for the immense grace of a religious vocation, and tried to be exact in every point of perfection, even the most minute. She had a great zeal for the good reputation of the Community, and would not let seculars know of any of our faults, however trivial. She always showed great love for all her religious sisters, but had no particular affection for any one. She was most assiduous in vocal and mental prayer, and strove to keep herself constantly in the presence of God; this was the source of her intimate union with her Heavenly Spouse. She was always making progress in the spiritual life, and never stopped in the way of perfection. She edified and humbled me, for she made more progress in two years than I have in many. I am able without hesitation to assure the Community that in her we are making the acquisition of an excellent subject."

CHAPTER IV.

The Solemn Profession.

 HIS spouse of Jesus Christ desired nothing so much as to unite herself to her Beloved by the vows of religion. She prepared herself for this solemn act by a retreat of eight days in company with her two sisters. I could not describe her conduct during this holy time. I can only say that her acts of Divine love were so ardent that she seemed beside herself: but she always returned to her natural state when she listened to the Word of God. The sacred ceremony was fixed for the 3rd of October, 1847, the Feast of the Translation of the Relics of our glorious Mother St. Clare, and the Vigil of the Solemnity of our seraphic Father St. Francis, while, as it was the first Sunday of the month, it was also the Feast of the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the end of the retreat, Sister Mary Cherubina Clare wrote the following resolutions:—

1. I will take care to speak but little, and always in a low tone.

2. I will avoid laughing too readily, or for any length of time.

3. I will keep silence until I am spoken to.

4. I will be scrupulously exact in the observance of the holy rule, even in the smallest things.

5. I will always look upon myself as vile and fit for nothing.

6. I will approach the sacred tribunal of Penance as often as obedience allows, and there will weep over and detest all my faults, even the very least.

7. I will accomplish with promptitude the orders of obedience, even if they should be troublesome and difficult.

8. I will always submit to my Superior, looking upon myself as the last of all.

9. I will study always to do the will of my Superior, and never to do my own.

10. Whoever the Superior may be I will always see in her the authority of God and the representative of our holy Mother St. Clare.

11. I will always think and speak well of my Superiors, in all and for all.

12. I will always entertain a loving fear of God,

and will be mindful of what He has done for me, and what He requires from His spouse, that is to say, constant and great love. My crucified Jesus, with Thy holy grace I will be faithful to these resolutions taken at Thy sacred feet."

The evening before the ceremony she made a confession of the past year, and then begged her Mistress to excuse her from the refectory, as she felt quite unable to take any food, so great was her joy; and also because she hoped in solitude to prepare herself better for the inestimable grace she was about to receive; but the Mistress told her she must deny her own will and go to the refectory with her companions, suggesting to her, however, another much more beautiful flower of mortification which she could offer to her Divine Spouse. This was, to deprive herself that evening of the satisfaction of seeing her mother and sister, who had come from Rome to be present at the ceremony, and who were then in the parlour. It is not difficult to imagine what the novice felt on hearing these words. For two years they had been separated, and now they were once more to meet. Meekly, however, bowing her head, she said, "I will do as you wish." She there-

fore both went to the refectory and to choir, but in returning from choir to go to her cell, as she passed through a corridor into which the parlour door opened, she heard her beloved mother's voice. The impression it made upon her was so strong that she shook convulsively. However, she said nothing, but withdrew to her cell, undisturbed and happy, where, prostrating herself at the feet of Jesus Christ, she offered to Him the sacrifice of not seeing her mother, saying to Him, "My Divine Spouse, Thou didst leave Thy beloved mother that Thou mightest die for me, and I also have left my home and the world, that, dying to all, I might live for Thee alone, in Thee and with Thee. Therefore my mother is no more for me, and from this moment I give up all my relations for Thy sake ; Thou shalt be to me father, mother, and my most holy and Beloved Spouse." As soon as she had made this act of generous renunciation, thoroughly determined to consummate the sacrifice of not seeing her mother if exacted by obedience, she banished from her mind every thought but that of her Spouse, Jesus crucified. She could not sleep that night, so great was her joy that the happy moment was at hand in which she should unite herself to her Heavenly Spouse by the vows of religion. On the

morning of the 3rd October, his lordship the Bishop Louis Laudi Vittori came to preside at the solemnity. Some idea may be formed of the deep emotion of Sister Mary Cherubina Clare, and of the fervour which she brought to this sublime act, by which she made to God the most agreeable and most entire sacrifice of her whole being, if we remember the ardent desire she had had from her tenderest childhood to consecrate herself to her Heavenly Spouse, and the virtuous dispositions with which she had endeavoured to prepare herself during her year of Noviciate. In making her holy profession she offered herself to God as a victim of expiation for sinners, uniting her sacrifice with that which Jesus Christ made of Himself in the Garden of Olives, when He accepted from the hands of His Heavenly Father the bitter chalice of His Passion. She received at this time abundant light and grace from God, and formed a fresh resolution to abandon herself to His most holy Will in all things. It seemed to her as if Jesus had Himself lovingly invited her in these words, "Come, my beloved spouse, come to Me." Relating one day what she had then felt, she said, "It is impossible to explain the feelings and the inspirations I received. I passed twenty-four hours almost unconscious as to whether I were in heaven or

on earth. In Holy Communion it appeared to me as if God transformed my soul into Himself, and that I was already separated from my body. I can never explain what I felt at that moment."

As soon as the solemnity was over, she asked as a favour that her Mistress would allow her not to go to the parlour according to the custom, but to retire to her cell to thank her Divine Spouse and to pour forth her soul before Him, without being remarked by any one, that she might not be distracted by persons of the world. But this favour was not granted her, and she went to the grate with her two companions, Sister Clare Angelica and Sister Mary Collette. Hardly had she entered the parlour than Madame Saraceni arrived. She has since owned that this sight of her beloved mother made such an impression upon her that she felt unable to stand; but she immediately turned towards Jesus, offering to Him this filial affection, and promising Him to be His alone, and not even to desire to see again one she so fondly loved unless it were His Will. Our Lord took her at her word, for, although her good mother survived her, Sister Mary Cherubina Clare never saw her after this time of her profession: Jesus no doubt wishing to purify His spouse from all natural affec-

tions, that the favours He intended to bestow upon her might meet with no obstacles. Speaking of Holy Communion during these three days, she said: "My soul was incapable of desiring anything more upon this earth, and this makes me think that the real espousals of my soul with Jesus took place in Holy Communion on these days. It seemed to me as if my soul were then separated from my body. I know not if what I here state is an extravagant expression arising from my ignorance, but I make use of it because I am quite at a loss to know how to explain what I felt in those happy moments. I seemed to have a new being, and the state in which I found myself was equally new. God alone, I think, could explain it." When these three days were passed, Sister Mary Cherubina Clare seemed to enter still more into herself, and to lead a yet more holy life, feeling, no doubt, that she had now a greater obligation of tending to perfection, and of drawing still closer the bonds which united her to her Divine Spouse. She felt much consolation in conforming to the custom of remaining another year in the Noviciate, under the direction of the Novice Mistress Sister Mary Philomena Giovannini, upon whom she depended for everything, like the last of the novices. She would

have wished to have remained thus all her life, if it had been allowed; but it was not the custom, so that she had again to give up her will and submit. The above named Mistress told me that she examined carefully the conduct of the three young professed, and that she saw in all of them great exactitude in obeying the holy rule, and a careful conformity to the orders of holy obedience, whether expressed to them by the Mother Abbess or by herself; but that Sister Mary Cherubina Clare strove in everything with the greatest zeal and fervour to perfect herself in all virtues in an eminent degree, especially in humility, obedience, mortification, and charity. Hence arose that ardent thirst for the conversion of sinners which already consumed her and made her desire to be the mediatrix and victim between God and them. The manifestation of conscience which she voluntarily made every week to her Mistress convinced this religious that Sister Mary Cherubina Clare was leading a really interior and holy life, and one which might be called saintly in all things.

Her Divine Spouse made her understand on several occasions that it was His Will she should exercise herself in the practice of a mortified and crucified life, entirely deprived of consolation; and prepare herself

for a heavy cross upon which the spiritual edifice of her sanctification would afterwards be raised. She corresponded so well to these Divine warnings that the desire of suffering increased in her in proportion as the certainty of her future trials was made known to her. Then God revealed to her that for five years she would have to carry the cross of severe afflictions; but she abandoned herself completely to the Divine Will, and made all known to her experienced Mistress, that she might teach her how to correspond with the designs of God and become a saint. Her Mistress, for greater security, told her to inform her Confessor of what passed within her, and this she did with scrupulous exactitude, and was ever most submissive to his orders.

During this first year of her profession she applied herself to cultivate a true spirit of obedience towards her Novice Mistress, so that afterwards her submission towards the Mother Abbess might be perfect even in things of trifling moment.

God often made her know in Holy Communion that He willed her to recommend sinners to His Divine mercy, more especially persons consecrated to Him, for whom she was to live in a state of continual crucifixion. After receiving this Divine intimation,

she determined to embrace a life of continual penance and mortification; and though obedience would not permit her any corporeal austerities beyond those common to the whole Community, she contrived to suffer constantly, without, however, making herself remarked by others. From the time that God gave her this particular light she was often seen to weep for the salvation of sinners. She knew that this suffering was pleasing to her Divine Spouse, because He often gave her proofs of it by granting her many favours and great consolations, which encouraged her to endure still more. She would have looked upon that day as lost in which she had not practised some act of mortification, always taking care, however, that God alone should be her witness. The time was now approaching when she was to leave the Noviciate, and to lose the guidance of her Mistress. This was a painful blow for Sister Mary Cherubina Clare, who, as she said, would have wished to have remained under her all her life. It would be impossible to describe her sorrow when the last day came; she was awake the whole night with the thought that henceforth she could no more depend upon her whom she looked upon as her guardian angel, since it was she who advised, enlightened, and guided her. Sister Mary

Philomena, before consigning the three young religious to the hands of Mother Abbess, gave them a long instruction full of that perfect spirit of piety which she possessed in such an eminent degree.

The good sisters were deeply moved, but Sister Mary Cherubina Clare had to retire to her cell to give free vent to her tears. There, prostrate at the feet of Jesus crucified, she offered Him the sacrifice she had just made ; then she went to her dear Mistress's cell, and kneeling before her, entreated her to promise that she would always tell her of her faults with the same frankness as heretofore. Her Mistress, knowing so well the sincerity of this dear sister, willingly granted her humble request.

CHAPTER V.

The First Five Years after she left the Noviciate.

ON the 3rd of October, 1848, the three young professed sisters took their place in the common dormitory, and immediately Sister Mary Cherubina Clare renewed her act of submission at the feet of the Mother Abbess, Sister Mary Fidelis Valentini. A month later God allowed the burden of Superiorship to fall upon the shoulders of the poor and unworthy religious who writes these memoirs, and all that I shall now relate of Sister Mary Cherubina I have either learned from herself, or I have seen with my own eyes.

She told me that she felt drawn by God to meditate specially upon the bitter Passion of Jesus; the solitude of her cell was therefore very sweet to her, but she was only allowed to enjoy this retreat in her free time, and not during Community exercises. From the moment she was clothed with the religious habit,

and still more after her holy profession, she conceived quite a special devotion towards the sufferings of Jesus, her Divine Spouse, and in meditating on these painful mysteries her soul was taught sublime truths and inflamed with heavenly ardour. She then understood more fully the greatness of the benefit she had received from our Lord, and in His bleeding wounds, especially that of His Sacred Side, she realised better the price of her religious vocation. Then shedding an abundance of tears, she would offer herself wholly and unreservedly to Jesus, uniting her heart and will to the heart and will of her crucified Love.

Jesus often showed Himself to her, sometimes on the cross, sometimes covered with wounds, telling her to consider them attentively, for He wished her to be the companion of His sufferings. His faithful spouse abandoned herself entirely to His good pleasure, and Jesus soon made known His acceptance of this act of abandonment, and continued to give clear proofs of it for the next five years, in the following way. Little by little Sister Mary Cherubina Clare was plunged in profound darkness, without finding any consolation in meditating upon the sufferings of Jesus her Spouse, which was quite unusual for her. She thought that

this painful state would soon come to an end, but, on the contrary, her sufferings increased, so much so that it seemed to her hardly possible to live. She turned to God, but the heavens were of bronze for her; Jesus no longer made Himself felt, and her Confessor could not afford her any relief. She feared her past confessions had been faulty, and begged in vain to be allowed to make a general confession. She thought to find in this act peace for her soul, and when the permission was refused her sorrow was at its height. During these five years of trial it seemed as if all hell were let loose against her, so violent and so varied were the temptations to which she was exposed. She was especially tempted against faith and patience by the most cruel attacks of the demon of despair; the devil of pride raised up in her mind thoughts against humility, and the angelic virtue even had to undergo its own peculiar trial, though in a less degree; but the virtue of obedience was tried to the utmost. She felt an extreme repugnance, even positive opposition, to the orders of her Father Confessor and of her Superior, and these temptations were all the more painful as she was in such interior dryness, and believed herself abandoned by God. This painful aridity made all Community exercises distaste-

ful and irksome to her, so that she had to do violence to herself even to go to choir and conform to the regular observance of the Community, whereas formerly all this had been her delight. She felt as if she were herself the cause of her present state, and could only sigh and weep over her misery. She tormented herself all the more as it seemed to her that there was no remedy for her sorrow; and believing that it must have been brought about by her own fault she judged, in the bitterness of her heart, that she must be living in a state displeasing to God. Then the devil tried to discourage this holy soul by trying to force upon her the conviction that there was no God nor future state; that consequently it was useless to labour for the acquisition of virtue. The impression this produced upon her mind was so strong, and obscured her understanding to such an extent, that she could neither reason nor believe to the contrary. Although she never consented to these imaginations, but, on the contrary, would have willingly given her life for the faith; still, not feeling within herself strength to reject them as she would have wished, she was continually tormented with the fear of having yielded. Formerly she had found strength and consolation in Holy Communion; now it had be-

come her torture, both on account of her temptations against the faith, as also of her fears respecting the state of her conscience. However, the devil never succeeded in making her abandon Holy Communion daily. To gain greater strength, and to be more assured of doing what was right, she would, when the temptation was greatest, ask me for the blessing of holy obedience and a direct order not to omit Holy Communion. I gladly satisfied her desire, and faithful to this method, she overcame the tempter with courage. She has told me that at the very moment of being most sorely tempted against faith she felt, after my blessing, a special grace granted her to resist and overcome it.

Most violent temptations to despair attacked her at the same time, the evil spirit making her believe that her manner of life was not pleasing to God—that it was even in direct opposition to His Will, and that, having thus incurred the displeasure of God, nothing she did could be agreeable to Him. He would tell her at other times that she would never find mercy with God, so she only lost her time by trying, and indeed increased the Divine anger and indignation against her. All these temptations were as cruel thorns which pierced her soul; and, indeed,

what suffering could be more terrible than to believe herself separated from God? These thoughts continued to take more and more possession of her heart; for although she always made acts of confidence in God and of resignation to the Divine Will, she still felt herself quite cold and incapable of making a fervent act of love to God. After four years passed in this painful state her sufferings became so great that she could no longer bear up under them, and her health suffered considerably. On the octave day of the holy patriarch St. Joseph, she was attacked with a high fever and tremblings, which made even her bed shake under her. The Community wished a doctor to be sent for, but, as I knew that her physical sufferings were brought on by her interior struggles, I at first refused; however, finding these violent convulsions did not cease, I yielded. As soon as the doctor saw her he ordered her to be bled, but as the fever did not diminish, the bleeding was repeated a second and a third time. To increase the sufferings of His spouse, God permitted that our ordinary Confessor should be ill, so that he could not come to order, in virtue of holy obedience, this trial to cease. Nevertheless God inspired the extra-ordinary Confessor to hear the confession of this poor

sister. I took care to tell him beforehand that her malady proceeded from the interior struggles the soul had to sustain ; this induced him, after giving her absolution, to command her to go to Holy Communion with the Community the next day. To this she only said, " Very well, I will obey." This excellent priest then told her that in a few days he would come again, and give her absolution in the confessional. This happened before the doctor's arrival, and when, later in the day, he came, he found her much better, so that she was able to receive Holy Communion with the others the following morning. After this she enjoyed a few days' peace, and her health was restored ; but this repose was destined to be of short duration. However, she profited by it to renew her resolutions of preferring death a thousand times to committing the smallest offence against God. She would say, " I put my trust in God ; nothing shall make me doubt His love ; nothing shall make me lose my confidence ; and if I do not will it, I shall never fall into any sin, no, not the slightest." However, her trials were not over ; the devil again attacked her, making her believe that her soul was stained with many grievous faults, so that she looked upon herself as a great sinner. It seemed to her that God was no

longer a merciful Father, but, on the contrary, that He was incensed against her. She felt herself only worthy to be with the demons, and she seemed to see them rejoicing in their triumph over her. The infernal enemy told her that her virtues were false, her good works without merit, that consequently she was bereft of Divine grace, and already sentenced to eternal torments, which alone she deserved. I could never give an adequate idea of the anguish of this poor sister, nor of the bitter days she passed, thinking that not only was she out of the way of perfection, but even of salvation, and the enemy of God. Sadness, grief, and terror assailed her at the same time, and rendered her life a kind of interior martyrdom : nevertheless she continued most faithful to the least of her duties. The bitterness in which her heart was plunged was caused by the thought of her ingratitude towards the Sovereign Good, whom she had so many times outraged by her sins. When the fifth year was drawing to a close I saw her several times as if in an agony. She would say to me, in a faltering voice, "Mother, I can bear no more ; help me, for charity's sake !" One day she spoke to me in these terms : "I feel grievously tempted to despair, because it seems to me that the devil knows I shall be his for all eternity.

Last night in a dream he appeared about to choke me, and I awoke with a feeling of strangulation, and as if a heavy weight were on my chest; I could not move my arm to take holy water; my idea is, that all is over for me, that I shall never find mercy with God." I knew very well that such a miserable creature as I could not do her any good, except to bless her in the spirit of faith, which I did several times. Her state excited my deepest compassion; so much so, that I entreated the Father Confessor to obtain from God, if it were His Will, that these interior trials might soon be diminished, for I feared for her life. He told me that they would shortly come to an end, and so it came to pass.

Although the different temptations which Sister Mary Cherubina Clare endured with such courage and generosity sometimes reduced her to a state of mortal sadness, nevertheless, by the grace of God, she remained victorious over the devil in every encounter. The evil one was confounded; for in spite of all his efforts, he was constrained to see Sister Mary Cherubina Clare, not only victorious, but filled with invincible patience, lively faith, and profound humility. She resigned herself simply and humbly to the Will of Divine Providence, in order that her soul might be

purified by any means which her Spouse thought best for her eternal good. Towards the close of the fifth year her interior trials and troubles began to diminish, although they did not leave her entirely. At last, one day, on going to confession, she felt as if a huge load were lifted off her heart. And she told the Father Confessor that she left his confessional with a totally different feeling from what she had entered it. From that hour peace was restored to her soul.

CHAPTER VI.

She is Employed in Different Offices.



WHEN this period of trial was passed, Sister Mary Cherubina Clare was successively made infirmarian, dispenser (*économe*), Novice-Mistress, and last of all Vicaress. She had also at one time the care of waking the Community. Her virtue never failed her in any of these different employments, but she always looked upon herself as the last, and servant of all, and was always most diligent and attentive to her duties. As she was naturally delicate and of an extreme sensitiveness, many services, which attendance upon the sick required of her, caused her nature much suffering and repugnance, but her heroic conduct soon overcame nature. I will relate an instance of this. One of the lay-sisters had a putrid wound in the right breast, which emitted, as may be easily imagined, a fearful smell. Sister Mary Cherubina, however, showed the greatest readiness to wait upon her, and

when the loathsomeness of the discharge was so excessive as to cause her stomach to turn, she would, to overcome herself the more effectually, smell the offensive linens she had just taken off the wound; this generosity did not fail to reap its reward, and soon she could render the most revolting services to the poor sufferer without repugnance.

Day and night she waited on the sick, without ever sparing herself in anything; and when she was dispenser, she was most attentive that nothing should be wanting to the religious through her fault, either in food or clothing. She was particularly remarkable for her love towards the poor. Oh, what great compassion, did she not feel for them! She would often say, "Ah, while we want for nothing, these poor things want everything! and yet in what have I merited more than they?" She frequently begged me to allow her to relieve all the poor who came to the Convent gate, saying that God would provide for us; as, indeed, often happened in remarkable ways.

When she had the all-important office of Novice-Mistress she first endeavoured to detach these young hearts from home affections, and from all that savoured of the world; then to fill them with contempt for all frivolity, and with an immense love for the

Sovereign Good, and a tender devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, telling them that if they practised these lessons they would become true spouses of Jesus, and exact observers of the holy rule. These happy sisters could not but admire the spirit of sublime sanctity in their Mistress, whom many times they saw in ecstasy. It often happened that when they went to speak to her they received no answer, for she was unconscious of their presence. On one of these occasions they called me to smell the delicious perfume she exhaled. No wonder that her novices looked upon her as a saint, and loved her as such. And she loved them, and was all thoughtfulness and solicitude for their spiritual and temporal welfare. It not unfrequently happened that in the midst of one of her Noviciate instructions she would be transported out of herself, and as she still continued to speak, the novices who knew her best would use many pious stratagems to prolong the instruction, that they might hear, as they said, words from Paradise. Her repugnance to accept the office of Vicarress was so great that obedience alone could overcome it; but once in office, her fidelity to the smallest duty of her charge could not be surpassed. And, if she had always felt herself bound to be most exact to every point of the

holy rule, she felt this more incumbent upon her then, so that, unless absolute duty prevented her, she never failed to be the first at every Community exercise. As my health had been delicate for some years past, she strove to relieve me as much as possible by doing what I ought to have done; and even when obliged to keep her bed, she continued to direct and give advice as far as she was able. She watched over all the necessities of the Community with tender solicitude, taking care that, so far as was consistent with holy poverty, nothing should ever be wanting to the Sisters through any negligence on her part. She never forgot the poor, and took care that workmen employed in the Convent should be properly treated. If she heard of any poor family who were ashamed to beg, she would ask permission to send them something. Very often in her charity she would tell me to take care of my health, and that she would see to everything that had to be done; the only duty from which she would have been glad to have been dispensed was the parlour, and to appear at the grate; however she always yielded to necessity with as good a grace as if she had gone there willingly; and those who came to speak to her always went away pleased and edified.

CHAPTER VII.

Jesus Invites Her to Renew Her Espousals.

SISTER Mary Cherubina Clare prepared for the Festival of Pentecost of the year 1853 with extraordinary fervour and with the greatest recollection possible, our Lord communicating to her a lively desire of being more intimately united to Himself, and of aspiring to the happiness of losing her whole being in Him. The annual retreat preparatory to the coming of the Holy Ghost began on the 5th May. On the first day our Lord made her draw near to His Sacred Heart that she might experience its sweetness; He made known to her that He wished her to be united in Him, and transformed through love into Him. She, on her side, asked Him to let her renew her espousals on Calvary, that her union with Him might be on the cross and in suffering; wishing to endure all for the salvation of souls. In the course of the retreat our Lord gave her to understand that the trials of the

previous five years had been very pleasing to Him, and that in consequence she merited now to feel the effects of His love in a sensible manner. Then Jesus told her that the union could not be perfect unless she gave Him her will. To which she replied that although she had long since done this, she wished now to renew the offering with a promise of shutting herself up as if dead in His Sacred Heart, never more to leave this her resting-place, at the same time telling Him that she wished to purify her heart from the slightest defect or imperfection, and from even the most innocent affections, so as to remove every obstacle to the perfect reign of Jesus in her heart. Thus were passed the ten days of retreat preparatory to her heavenly espousals. On the morning of the 15th, the Feast of Pentecost, after confession, and having obtained the permission of the Confessor to renew her espousals, she approached the holy altar with the most ardent sentiments of love and faith; then she made the following act, which she committed to writing:—

“ My Lord and my God, my most amiable Spouse Jesus, Thou who hast created me out of nothing, redeemed me with Thy most precious Blood, Thou who hast bestowed so many graces and blessings

upon me, Thou who hast raised me to the sublime dignity of Thy spouse, notwithstanding my utter unworthiness—oh, of Thine infinite goodness, deign to accept the oblation of my entire self which I here renew before Thee. I consecrate to Thee my soul with all its powers, my body with all its faculties, all that I have and all that I am, wishing hereby to celebrate again with Thee, O Lord, the solemn and holy espousals which I contracted with Thee in my religious profession, but to celebrate them this day on Calvary, embracing Thy cross in a more intimate and perfect union with Thee. My desire is to be thus all transformed into Thee, to live no more in myself, but to breathe and live in Thee alone, that Thou alone mayest live in me.

“I call upon the Queen of Dolors, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, and the Beloved St. John, to be the witnesses of our solemn espousals. May the precious Blood shed from Thy Sacred Side be the indelible seal of this present act. This 15th day of May, 1853, Feast of Pentecost.

“MARY CHERUBINA CLARE OF ST. FRANCIS.”

She could never explain what took place in her soul at this time. When she spoke to me of it,

she was, as it were, beside herself, and would say to me, "Mother, I am now espoused to Jesus on Calvary; I am affianced to the cross. Oh, what consolations come to us with the cross of Jesus, my only Good, my only Treasure, my bleeding Spouse!" I told her that "she should be prudent in asking for crosses, because Jesus was most liberal in this matter." But she answered, "Oh, how happy should I be to find myself really on the cross with our Divine Redeemer, my Spouse, that I might gain souls for heaven. I have no other desire than that of drawing souls to God. I hope that, being affianced on Calvary, where our redemption was accomplished, I shall be able to save many souls; and do you, Mother, help me, for many are lost." This fervent and beautiful soul passed the whole day as if in ecstasy, and, desiring that the operations of God in her soul might be hidden from all eyes, and her faults only known, she kept in her cell as much as regularity to Community duties allowed. On the following Monday and Tuesday, Jesus attracted this spouse after Holy Communion to Calvary, showing Himself to her, and inviting her to His cross with these words, "Come to My throne, My spouse, and place thyself near to Thy Beloved, all suffering and bleeding." And as He thus

spoke it seemed to Sister Mary Cherubina that Jesus pressed her to His Sacred Heart. "But it is difficult," she said, "to explain what passed in my soul at that moment. I can say, however, that these things are of short duration, for no one could live long in such a state." I thus learned that this beautiful soul was raised to a degree of sublime union with our Lord. The favours which she now continually received were doubtless the reward of her fidelity during those five years of cruel suffering.

Wishing me to know what she experienced in Holy Communion, she explained herself thus : " I feel my heart beat violently ; it seems to dilate, then to open, and, when I have received Jesus, to shut again. Oh ! what greatness enclosed in my poor and narrow breast ! It is impossible to explain it, for it is a Divine work. In Holy Communion the heart becomes the palace of love. . . . Then, seeing itself to be the temple of the Divinity, it becomes more and more inflamed. My heart dilates, and a Divine flame seems to consume me." On first coming to herself, the heavenly joy which inundated her soul made her break forth into such expressions as these : " My God, I ask of Thee suffering, pure suffering, if this be pleasing to Thee. I make this petition in order to unite my small

pains to the many and grievous torments of Thy bitter Passion and ignominious death upon the cross! Ah, yes, I will cry aloud that I am espoused to the cross! O Jesus! Thou didst shed all Thy precious Blood to save souls; I too offer Thee my blood, that it may be shed to the last drop as Thine was shed even to the last drop, as was clearly shown when, after death, Thy Sacred Side was opened with a lance and water issued forth. O my Jesus, deign to accept my offering, for it is that of a bride of Calvary."

She renewed her espousals every year on the Feast of Pentecost, preparing for this act by confession, Holy Communion, and other devout practices, never omitting to ask the blessing of the Father Confessor and of myself, and passing the preceding night in prayer, unless constrained by obedience to take a little rest. The time after Holy Communion was spent on Calvary, and for a while she was quite beside herself. When her ordinary duties were fulfilled, she retired to her cell to pour forth her soul before God. In the evening she came of her own accord to give me an account of how she had spent the day of her espousals. She would say: "Mother, I have been with Jesus on Calvary. What satisfaction do we

not feel there ! I hope to realise my desire of suffering for the salvation of souls."

After the espousals of which I have just spoken, God made known to her that henceforth she was to be even more constant in recommending to His mercy poor sinners, for whom she was to live on Calvary crucified with Him. Then day after day, with ever-increasing fervour, did she renew the sacrifice of herself—weeping and suffering for sinners—to appease the Divine indignation. She thus rendered herself so agreeable to God that He continued to give her new proofs of His love, by drawing her to still closer union with Himself. This served to excite within her a still greater thirst for suffering; she sought out means for making her sufferings continual, and would, indeed, have considered that day lost on which she had not made some sacrifice for God. If she allowed herself some rest at night it was through obedience; but her mind was still plunged in profound and sorrowful meditations. Her very heart seemed to fail her as she reflected upon the continual offences committed against God, that tender Father so full of love. She felt such an intense compassion for souls who have lost their innocence, that this thought would cause her to lose her

senses, and on returning to herself, if she were in her cell, she would with a loud voice invite these poor sinners, by prayers, sighs, and tears, to return to God and to do penance, asking to suffer for them, if such were the Will of God; and so vehement was the charity which inflamed her, that, had she not given it some vent she would have fallen a victim to it. Often did she come to my cell at night inviting all creatures to love God and to avoid sin, saying, "Why not love Him who loves us so ardently? Ah! Mother, let us induce all hearts to love God, and let us try and make amends to Him for all." At these words she would lose the use of her outward senses, and only come to herself through the virtue of obedience; then, apparently unconscious, she would exclaim: "Oh! what a sight it is to see God irritated! to see so many souls happy in the midst of their sins, and so many more already cast into hell for all eternity."

About this time Jesus bestowed upon her a gift from Calvary. She was seized quite suddenly with a sharp pain in the spine, which did not leave her all the rest of her life; but it was to her a subject of joy, as she had thus always something to suffer for her Beloved. Never did she utter one word of complaint.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of Her Exactitude in the Observance of Her Vows.

SISTER Mary Cherubina Clare was humble, therefore from the very first she had taken care to keep the operations of grace in her soul, secretly manifesting her interior with perfect simplicity, however, when obedience required her to do so, and always submitting the graces and inspirations she received to the judgment of her Confessor. If she had been faithful to this in her noviciate, she became still more so after her profession, and in order never to do her own will she made a fifth vow of obedience to her Confessor, the observance of which she practised with such fidelity that she expired in obedience to his voice, as we shall see in its place.

At times, when she was absorbed in God, and giving no signs of life, an order given even mentally by her Confessor, would bring her to herself. This has been my experience also in her case, and I say it

to my confusion. She and I often went alone at night to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, or before the shrine of our holy Mother St. Clare, and generally she became, after a few minutes, quite lost and absorbed in God ; but as soon as I required her by obedience (even mentally) to come to herself, her senses instantly returned. On days when she was more than usually intent on Divine things it was very difficult for her to take any nourishment, but an order of obedience sufficed to make her overcome herself, though it was easy to see the difficulty she had in making the necessary effort to swallow : she has sometimes told me that it seemed as if her throat were closed. As I was ill during the time that she was Vicarress, she was often obliged to take my place in the Community, and to attend to all the affairs of the Convent, so that for whole days she had not a minute to herself. On these occasions she would ask the blessing of her Confessor that she might always remain conscious of what she was doing, and that nothing might appear exteriorly of what was passing within her. After this, it was really admirable to see with what presence of mind she performed all her duties. At other times she came to me for a special blessing that she might not appear absent during the Community

prayers, lest instead of giving the blessing, for instance, at dinner-time, she should let fall some word which would be an indication of the state of her soul. When she was obliged to go to the parlour for the business of the Convent, (not being able to go myself I sent her,) she would sometimes come to me for the blessing of obedience, saying at the same time: "I go because obedience sends me, but it is real suffering to have to do with worldly people, when we do not find Him there. I fear lest I should mention His name who keeps me close to Him. Bless me, I beg of you." And as a reward of her great faith in obedience, she was always enabled to acquit herself with ease and politeness of whatever she had to do in the parlour. Had obedience not constrained her to accept the office of Vicarress, she would have hidden herself anywhere to escape the charge: obedience also made her bow her head when the delicate and responsible task of Novice-Mistress was imposed upon her, but she dried her tears, saying: "It would have been my greatest happiness to live in the most retired corner of the Convent, only to come out for Community duties, and never more to see seculars; but our Lord's Will for me seems to be the reverse of all this. May His holy Will be done!" I often told her to pray for

some spiritual intentions regarding my own soul, and she always gave me the required information, notwithstanding her extreme repugnance to doing so. On one occasion, for instance, I asked her, in the name of obedience, to tell me if I had any real cause for uneasiness with regard to something that troubled me, without, however, telling her what it was. She answered me immediately that I had cause for uneasiness, but it gave her so much pain to tell me this that she turned quite pale, so that I thought she would have fainted. I have already mentioned how, in compliance with obedience, she rose from her bed after being three times bled in the height of a great fever, and went to choir as if nothing was the matter with her, and without uttering a word of excuse or complaint.

I have sometimes said things to her in play, but have invariably remarked that she understood them seriously, and prepared to obey ; she was accustomed to say that words spoken by a Superior come from God Himself. During the course of her long and painful malady, to how many heroic acts of obedience did she not subject herself ! I found it necessary to take care how I spoke of medicines and such things, for she would immediately have requested even those

to be given her which she knew would do her harm, if obedience had suggested them. Towards the end of her life her stomach became too weak to retain more than a spoonful of liquid, and if, through obedience, she took more, she immediately rejected it with indescribable torture, and she became so exhausted each time that she seemed as if already dead. I greatly feared to lose her after one of these attacks, although, seeing her so weak, I often could not help telling her to try and drink a little. She instantly obeyed, but the cruel suffering I saw that she underwent in vomiting it, as was invariably the case, made me regret having told her to take it. But she would only say, "It is true that these efforts cause me excruciating suffering, but I will die in obeying." A few hours before her death a sister suggested to her to take half-a-spoonful of some liquid, but at that time she could no longer swallow. However, as soon as the Sister had said this, she inquired if the Mother Abbess wished her to take it. Being answered in the negative, she was satisfied, and never again took anything.

She not only obeyed me during the two and twenty years that I was her Superior, but she constantly left her soul in my hands that she might have the

merit of obedience in all she did. As to the virtue of holy poverty, it may be truly said that, from her childhood she had always tried to take the worst for herself of everything, and had been a declared enemy of vanity in dress. As a religious she especially strove to excel in this virtue, which is the true ornament of a child of our seraphic Mother St. Clare. As regards clothing, she always contrived to have less than others, and what was barely sufficient, till at last she had not even a change; but still she said she was in want of nothing, having already many things—though in truth these were mere trifles, and quite worn out. It is certain that if I had required her to do so she would have accepted more, but I knew the pain such an obedience would have cost her; and left her in her blessed poverty. At table she would set aside a portion of what was given her, for she said that we do not deserve to be called poor if we want for nothing. In her illness, fearing lest holy poverty should suffer, she often entreated that no expense might be incurred on her account; and when I reminded her that we were not wanting in this virtue by procuring necessaries for the sick, she would reply, “But the real poor cannot get all I have.” Many times, to satisfy her, I told her to

accept as an alms, through obedience, what was given her ; but to the last she always said she had not lived like a real child of poverty. A short time before her death she gave up the few things of which she had had the use, that she might die poor, like Jesus upon the cross.

This faithful spouse of Jesus Christ preserved the beautiful lily of the angelic virtue in all its primitive purity. Although she entered religion at the age of twenty-one, and was very intelligent, she had the innocence and simplicity of a child.

About two years before she became a religious, her Confessor advised her to make the vow of virginity, which she did very willingly, and ever after continued to wear only dark colours ; she told her mother that she dressed thus because she wished to be a nun. When the time for which the vow had been made was expired, her Confessor asked her if she were glad she had made it, and whether she wished to renew it. She answered, with much simplicity, that she was quite satisfied, because it was a matter of indifference to her whether she wore a black or a coloured dress. She said this because the only privation she felt at that time as regarded her vow, was simply having to dress in black.

During the whole forty-seven years of her life she never knew what it was to offend against that angelic virtue, so great and so rare, which shone in her very countenance. She was like an angel, and when she spoke upon this subject she seemed like one entranced. She would often say, "Oh, what a treasure do we not possess, we who are virgins and spouses of the Immaculate Lamb—the very angels sing the praises of pure souls! Mother, we are the sisters and spouses of Jesus. Ah, that the world could know the beauty of this virtue!" She felt a certain satisfaction in speaking with those who possessed this precious jewel, and a kind of repugnance to be with those who did not. She even felt a greater affection for the imperfect among the former, than for married persons, even those leading a holy life. She could hardly bear to hear the parlour mentioned, and when obliged to go to the grate, one might have thought she was going to execution. "We can seldom go to the parlour," she would say, "without hearing something worldly."

It was enough for her to have left the world. She never allowed herself to form any attachment, however spiritual, that was not for God and in God. She detached herself as much as possible from her

sisters, although she well knew the great affection they all had for her. The intimate intercourse I had with her for so many years enables me to assert this with great certainty. She has often spoken to me thus: "Mother, I love you very much in our Lord, but this love draws me still nearer to God; if it were not so, I could not love you; I feel my heart too much inclined to love creatures; but I will have no other love but Jesus. Yes, Jesus wants pure hearts, free from all irregular and excessive attachment, even to parents, otherwise He abhors them." To keep her heart thus free she would never allow any sister to show her special marks of affection: if any one came too near to her, took her hand, or in kissing her hand, pressed it, to testify her esteem for her, she immediately assumed so severe an air that the poor sister was often moved to tears. It was only when she was transported with Divine love that she would sometimes take me by the hand to draw me towards the Sovereign Good who was her joy. In the long illness of which she died she was almost unable to make any movement without assistance: still she would suffer anything rather than allow any sister to touch her. Seeing how much it cost her to move, I told her to let the infirmarians

help her ; she answered, " If obedience requires this of me, I have no answer to make ; but if you will allow me, I would rather do everything for myself." When she was almost dying, a remedy had to be applied which required her to move ; but the water, which was rising rapidly, rendered it all but impossible. I begged her to keep herself quite quiet, and that I would see to what had to be done with all possible delicacy and consideration : however she succeeded in moving herself, to my great surprise. I said to her, " But what are you doing ?" She answered, " We are obliged to help ourselves as long as we can." She never allowed herself to think or speak of worldly affairs, and not even of her relations, except to pray for them. She spoke only of God and spiritual things, and looked upon it as a great defect in a religious to allow her heart or mind to be occupied with things of the world. An ecclesiastic, who was for some time Confessor of our Monastery, has asserted that this beautiful soul throughout her whole life never experienced that she was a child of Adam.

CHAPTER IX.

Sister Mary Cherubina Clare's Gift of Prayer.

THE life of this faithful spouse of Jesus was one continual prayer, a series of ecstasies, a life of Divine love. In meditation she was habitually deprived of the use of her senses, for Jesus acted so powerfully upon her soul that human nature seemed dead. She might have been taken for a body without life. At other times the ardour of her spirit was reflected upon her countenance, which appeared all shining. Her intense love of God made her live in a state of continual union with Him. I have often seen her in these Divine transports, in which she acquired an admirable knowledge of God and of what displeases Him. She knew of the gentle and loving ways by which He gains His creatures — she knew that she was transformed into God by means of love. In these states she enjoyed ineffable sweetness, and obtained such a lively faith in Divine truths, and

such a firm hope, that it is not easy to convey an idea of the knowledge thus imparted to her. She would sometimes say that she seemed to be immersed in the love of God, as in an ocean; and as out at sea nothing is to be seen but water, so all around she saw nothing but the love of God; and she added, that true love is so strong that it keeps its Divine Object always attached to the heart of the spouse, and does not suffer her to see or feel anything but through pure love. She not unfrequently was heard to exclaim, in the midst of her transports: "O creatures, why do you not begin to love even in this life? If I only knew what to do to hinder so great an evil as this of not loving Him who loves us so much, there is nothing I would neglect in order to gain so desirable an end." This burning flame of Divine love was increased day by day by continual prayer. In the fortieth year of her age she began to lead a life so detached from earthly things, so inflamed with Divine charity, that her frequent ecstasies lasted for many hours without interruption, during which time, deprived of her senses, her soul remained absorbed in God. When at length she came to herself, she broke forth into bitter complaints against creatures, because they did not walk in the way of Divine love, repeating

many times, "Oh, why is Love not loved?" But she spoke as one who knew not what she said. Occasionally I ventured to question her at these times, and she always answered me with the greatest submission. I would say to her, "Dear Mother Vicaress, do you think that all feel the love of God as you do?" She would answer: "All might do so if they would; even those persons who have never tasted the sweetness of God in prayer; only the will is needed, then love would soon follow. In the first place, the soul must be prepared; then God gives a horror of sin, and the soul abstains from it. After this, He illuminates the mind with the light of faith; and, lastly, He gently inflames the will. This is the way our amiable Jesus acts, and this is how each one can love God. It is enough that we give our consent; then He acts in us, but not without us, and it is nearly always by means of His Divine inspirations." As soon as she perceived that she had been talking she seemed troubled; but I reassured her, saying that there was nothing particular in what she had said. Towards the close of her life her ecstasies were almost uninterrupted, so that she suffered immensely, having, as Vicaress, to speak so often and see to so many things. She told me that she could not remain much longer on earth; and

on my asking the reason why, she replied: "Formerly, God, in making Himself felt in my soul, sustained me; in other words, I could be one with Him, and yet fulfil my ordinary duties; but now it is not so." I then pressed her to tell me the difference between the operations of God in preceding years and now, and she thus explained herself: "In past years when I placed myself in the presence of God, I felt a sense of recollection which made me long for solitude, and this happened to me even in the world. This interior recollection produced a feeling of weariness, so that it was difficult for me to speak, pray, or meditate; I could only love. I seemed at times as if bewildered, but I was not out of myself, so that I had presence of mind enough to attend to my duties. My next state was one in which all my faculties were united to God, so that I had still less power of attending to exterior things. I could succeed, however, by doing violence to myself; the effects experienced in this state cannot well be described, and must be felt to be understood. To this state succeeded another, in which I found myself suddenly absorbed in God, in such enjoyment that I could neither speak nor open my eyes; the violent action of this state upon my body seemed to deprive it of heat, just as we feel in

fainting fits. The effects produced in my soul by these ecstasies are forgetfulness of myself and the longing desire that God should be known and loved. I feel myself incapable of loving Him who loves me so tenderly, and I see my extreme ingratitude towards our Lord who has bestowed upon me so many graces. The impression made upon me is such, and the sweetness in which I am plunged so great, that if this state lasted long I could not live. I experience, at the same time, the utmost disgust for the things of earth. Since the day when our most merciful Lord attracted me to Himself by means of prayer, I have felt myself detached from all created things. Thus, as soon as I place myself in the presence of God, I am as one dead, not only to exterior things, but also to myself; that is to say, I become insensible, and live only in God. I never could explain how God works then in my soul. I will say, however, that the first time this happened to me, I thought my soul was being separated from my body, and I could only admire the power of God, which raises a soul out of the region of sense, restoring it afterwards to its previous state. At these times I conceive an intense regret for having so often offended a God so worthy of being loved by all creatures. In the state in which

I now am it needs no effort to put myself in the presence of God, for a single thought, a word that I hear, impetuously carries me away, and I am absorbed in God; my soul rejects all that is not God, and yet it knows that the perfect possession of God is impossible in this life. It seems to me that there is real danger of death; because in this state the soul is no more upon the earth, a supernatural force holds it between heaven and earth, and so great is the suffering produced by this violence that it must be felt to be understood. When I come to myself, I feel as if my whole body were dislocated. I have no strength to stand or walk. I am in pain all over, so that I am constrained to stop wherever I am, for I cannot move. If this happened often I should die." And it was indeed as she said, she could not live long. About a year before her last illness it was enough to mention the holy Name of God in her presence and she was immediately transported out of herself; when the moment for her sacramental union with her Beloved drew near she was frequently in ecstasy, so that an order of obedience was requisite to enable her to walk and to open her mouth. She has often told me that she did not know how she had communicated, as at the time of Holy Communion she was not in a

state to open her mouth. After receiving our Divine Lord she often did not know if she were alive or not, and latterly when we came out of Church she would ask my blessing that she might retain her presence of mind; and, thanks to the faith she had in holy obedience, she succeeded in being with her sisters without any visible constraint, though she suffered much from the effort to keep everything concealed. She would often tell me afterwards that she did not know how to endure the furnace of love which contact with the Divinity enkindled within her. She assured me that she felt as if she were being burnt; and the beating of her heart was so violent that all who drew near her heard it. When these transports were most frequent she remained as one dead, and passed whole days without scarcely taking any nourishment; and the little she did eat was only swallowed through obedience.

She said to me one day: "To speak plainly, I think God wishes to have my heart that He may wound it when He pleases. And this is how it happens. When I am in prayer, but not quite deprived of my senses, enjoying quietly the presence of my God, and only conscious that my Saviour is near me, it seems to me that I receive a wound in my

heart. I feel a sharp pain which transforms me sweetly into God ; I say sweetly, because there is no violence, but all is melted into love, which I could wish might never end. Sometimes this wound produces strange effects. I feel the presence of my God, who wishes to give Himself to me, and I long for Him to come ; and this desire, though most ardent, is still accompanied with profound peace. Then I see my poor soul as if enchained ; that is to say, I am in the impossibility of loving God as I could wish, so that I conceive a horror of my body, because it prevents my fully enjoying Him whom my soul loves so ardently." One day she described her state as a Purgatory. I could see she was suffering very much interiorly, and fearing for her health, I begged her to distract her mind a little from such thoughts. She replied : " Mother, I suffer a real Purgatory, which I will describe as well as I can. Sometimes feeling that my soul, in the impetuosity of its love, wishes to fly to God, I desire to quit my body, which is such an impediment to me, and for a time it seems to me that my spirit has indeed left its earthly tenement and flown towards the Sovereign Good ; but it is not so ; and He makes me understand that the moment is not yet come, and at the same time I feel

an interior conviction of the Infinite love which God bears me. Ah! my Sovereign Good, you look upon me as your beloved spouse! I feel that my life cannot last: my soul must fly to God. I see here a barrier which keeps me back, and this makes the desire of my soul to fly to God still more violent, for He alone can console it. This violence increases with the sense I have of my separation from the Divine Object for whom I so ardently long: this is the cruel Purgatory I suffer—a desire to be united to God and happy for ever in His bosom. O Mother! this is indeed a cruel Purgatory, to see God, and to be unable to unite oneself to Him for ever.” As she thus spoke, I saw that she was extraordinarily moved and agitated.

Very often on Thursday night, when our health permitted it, we went together to pray before the Blessed Sacrament or before the shrine of our holy Mother St. Clare, intending to keep company with Jesus agonising in the Garden of Olives. We said a few prayers together aloud, but often Mother Vicaress left off responding. Oh, what graces did not our Lord grant me during those precious hours! Unworthy religious as I am, our merciful Lord often made me participate in the graces of this privileged soul; it was

the prayers of this holy spouse of Jesus that obtained these favours for me. During these ten years of revolution we multiplied our visits to Jesus in the Garden of Olives, to obtain the conversion of sinners. She often used to say to me: "We must pass this night with Jesus agonising, but it must be in a real agony, and this to save souls who are in danger of being lost."

And so it was; for I can attest that these three hours, and sometimes the whole night, were passed in a species of agony painful alike to mind and body. Sometimes on leaving the Church I said to her: "Oh, Mother Vicarress, what a painful night!" and she would answer: "Yes; truly this night has been passed in company with Jesus agonising, and we have not followed the example of the weary Apostles who fell asleep; let us hope that we have gained some souls." On one of these nights, after praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Dolors, and to our holy Mother St. Clare, we kept silence for about three hours. I looked upon the beloved spouse of Jesus, and saw that she gave no sign of life, but she excited in me the most lively compassion; for I saw that the position in which she was would certainly cause her much pain when she came

to herself on account of the weakness of her spine ; so that I prayed to our Lord to bring her back to herself, if such was His good pleasure. At the very same moment she recovered the use of her senses, and with a deep sigh, exclaimed : “ Ah, why so much coldness and indifference for souls redeemed by Jesus at the price of so much suffering ! Ah, do you not see the cruel state of Jesus agonising and bathed in His precious Blood ? This Blood comes from His very Heart, and is forced thence by love for the salvation of souls : no one is excluded. Jesus suffered more in the Garden than in all other stages of His Passion. O Garden ! Garden ! how little art thou thought of ! . . . But I came here with my Mother. . . . Quick, quick, Mother, let us not lose time, not even an instant, for Jesus continues to shed His precious Blood ; it is the Blood of His Divine Heart, so full of love. Souls, souls, come to this Garden, and you will receive the baptism of Blood ! ” As she said these things her eyes were upraised and intently fixed ; she seemed to me as one who knows not what she says ; then a sudden silence would ensue. It is easy to imagine that such scenes as these made a profound impression upon me. May our Lord be for ever blessed for His tender mercies towards me. As the night

was far advanced, I said to her: "Mother Vicarress, let us not forget holy obedience which wills us to go to bed for an hour;" immediately recovering herself she replied: "Yes, let us go, I cannot walk; but obedience requires us to go to bed, so Jesus help me." Then I saw a twofold prodigy of obedience: for at the first intimation of obedience she instantly quitted the vision of God, and then had power to walk, although she was apparently like one dead. Yes; she truly resembled a corpse, for her eyes were shut and sunken, her nose and mouth pinched, her hands frozen, stiff, and withered. If on these occasions, as I parted from her at her cell door, I forgot to tell her to take some rest during the short time that yet remained, she indeed went to bed but not to rest. The following morning, after the Exercises of the Choir were over, I asked her if she had slept a little? "How could I," she would say, "whilst Jesus was shedding His precious Blood for souls; and yet, in spite of this, so many are lost!" These Fridays were passed in great abstraction of spirit, but grace enabled her to go through her ordinary duties, so that nothing extraordinary showed itself exteriorly. I remember one of these painful nights in particular; we had gone to the shrine of our holy Mother as

usual. Mother Vicaress in her charity prepared me a convenient place that my feeble health might not suffer, but after a few prayers she was transported out of herself; then suddenly coming back to her senses, she exclaimed: "Mother, I shall soon leave you. Jesus will take me to Himself, but I shall have much to suffer first. . . . Jesus, here I am, do with me what Thou wilt." Then she was silent for about half an hour, when she again came to herself she moved as one in violent pain. I asked her what was the matter? She replied: "The pain in my heart! . . . I cannot endure it and live! What are you doing? O my God! Ah! leave me, I cannot bear it; what are you doing to my poor heart? Oh, what anguish still to live on earth! yet but a little while and I am with you, O my God." Jesus had wounded her heart; I knew it, but I could not ask her; however, as usual, she told me all. One day, she said to me that her heart was not as it used to be, for Jesus was busy working there; and as she spoke she fell into an ecstasy, during which she bore no trace of suffering. Her mouth was smiling, her eyes, lit up with celestial joy, were fixed heavenward, her right hand rested upon her heart; then suddenly she exclaimed: "Oh, am I still on earth! My Beloved God, why do you

keep me still here? One cannot live with one's heart broken. How could Saint Teresa live? O Mother, ask Jesus to strengthen me; I am too weak—Jesus, help me! O creatures, love Jesus, and you will feel the effects of His Divine charity." And, again, I had not the courage to ask her what she felt in her heart.

During Lent she faithfully kept company with Jesus, following all the stages of His dolorous Passion, and the sorrows of Mary from the Thursday till the Saturday night; and although she performed her exterior duties with careful exactitude, she was often during these days deeply affected, and would come to me for the blessing of obedience to enable her to get through them. The last Lent that she was able to be about, her ecstasies were extraordinary, and her sufferings very great on account of the violence with which our Lord drew her to Himself, and enkindled within her a furnace, which, as she said, consumed her. At times she would tell me that the blood seemed boiling in her veins, especially near her heart. She thought that she should have found some relief from bleeding, but I could not consent to this, fearing to weaken her. One night, when I was in bed, she came to me to ask my blessing that she might bear the violence of the love which overwhelmed her. I

began to pray, and immediately she was transported in God. Seeing that she enjoyed great peace I left her quiet for some time, and contemplated her with much satisfaction. When I felt inspired to do so, I called her to herself in the name of obedience; she instantly obeyed, and said to me: "What pain I feel in my heart! O Mother, how I suffer! The Almighty to nothingness! The Creator to a miserable creature! A God to wretched me! Oh, my heart chokes me!" It was easy to see that she was suffering much from the excess of love; one saw the violent beating of her heart under her habit, and her breathing was very laboured. Thus she remained for a short time; then I gave her the blessing of obedience to go to bed, and she went away satisfied.

The longer this pure and beautiful soul lived, the more united she became to God. She would often tell me that her life could not last. I said that that would be according to the good pleasure of God. "Jesus," she replied, "has told me that I shall soon be in full possession of His Divine love." During the Lent of which I have just spoken, her ecstasies became more frequent, and the fire of Divine love inflamed her to such a degree, that for days together she suffered from a burning fever. She would sometimes say to me:

“ Jesus, my most sweet Spouse, raises my soul more frequently now, suddenly and quite unawares. He seems to me to lift my soul out of my body, placing it in His very Bosom; it is not possible for me to explain the Divine operations that are then effected in my soul. God reveals Himself to me more and more clearly; but how is this to be explained? It is enough merely to think of the Divinity. Divinity! oh, what a word this is, for my whole being to be transported and illuminated. Oh, word of Paradise! Divinity! When at length I come to myself again, I feel an immense wish of suffering for the love of God and for the salvation of souls, but especially of those who are consecrated to Him; and God lets me know that my desire will be granted. May it be soon, that souls may be saved. Oh, what sorrow! not to be able to ask for the suffering which I so ardently desire; but my wish is known to God.” I then asked her why she so much wished to suffer? “To save souls,” she replied; “but the thought of unworthy priests engrosses me at this moment. Oh, how many there are who go up to the holy Altar unworthily! What infidelity! and, alas! even the angelic virtue is not respected. Oh, unhappy priests! How you move me to pity! Ah, at least, do not approach the holy Altar of God! Dear

brothers, for the love of Jesus be converted ! God is waiting for you ! He will pardon you. Ah, Mother, let us hasten to assist these poor souls who are so worthy of commiseration, since they are not conscious of their deplorable condition ! The love which God bears to those souls who serve Him faithfully, and love Him with a pure and perfect love, is so ardent that He is ready to bestow upon them all the gifts and graces that He has ever granted to those who have loved and served Him with fidelity. God presses these souls to His loving Heart, and forgets their past infidelities. Sacred ministers of God, begin a new life ! abandon your self-interest, your love of pleasure, and turn all your affections towards God. No one is excusable if he have not this pure and holy love ; for who is he that cannot love God ? Is He not indeed the very love of souls, particularly of those who are specially consecrated to Him ? You priests, who are in the grace of God, do good to your neighbour ; this obligation is laid upon you. Throw off human fears and considerations, human passions and pleasures, and give yourselves up entirely to the care of souls ; this you are compelled to do, for God wills it of you ; but do it without delay, otherwise you will incur the Divine vengeance, and that is terrible ! ”

Then she was plunged into an ecstatic silence, her countenance beaming with joy as if in the enjoyment of a consoling vision ; and upon coming to herself she exclaimed, " Blessed be God, I see many priests, with true zeal labouring for the salvation of souls. Oh, holy priests, work courageously, and do not grow weary, for great will be your consolation and reward ! Oh, that I could help you ! If you did but know how much God loves you because you love the souls whom He has redeemed with His precious Blood ! Ah, Mother, let us also do our part : let us offer our slight sufferings and prayers, and all the good works that Divine Grace enables us to do ; let us offer all for this end ! "

I could not but know that the state in which she was almost constantly plunged during the last few months before being confined to her bed was very prejudicial to her health, for she took hardly any nourishment, and suffered continually in her back and head from constant application to heavenly things. On Thursday night, when all the religious had retired to rest, we prepared, according to our custom, to go to the Choir, but as I perceived that Mother Vicaress was so absorbed that she was not in a state to walk, and fearing she might be suffering

much, I gave her leave to go to bed. She expressed, however, great readiness to go to the Church, and told me that it was one of the last times we should watch together before the Blessed Sacrament and the shrine of our holy Mother St. Clare ; and so it was, for we only went once more, after which she had to keep her bed. As soon as we entered the Choir she prostrated herself as usual, and said with a deep sigh : “ To some, repose ; to others, watching with Jesus. How many priests and spouses of Jesus keep us company now ! Ah, Mother, let us do violence to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus ! ” After a few prayers said together we remained in silence, and about an hour afterwards our dear Mother Vicarress was transported out of herself. Her breathing was imperceptible ; she remained motionless, her head inclined towards one side, her arms hanging down as if dead, her eyes closed and sunken, her whole appearance that of a corpse. She inspired me with lively emotion and deep compassion, and notwithstanding my misery and unworthiness I was allowed to enjoy for a long time those blessed effects which, I think, all must experience who are near to souls so highly favoured by our Lord. May our merciful God deign to receive my heartfelt gratitude for all His mercies. But

obedience had imposed upon me the obligation of prudent watchfulness as regarded the time to be spent in these vigils, requiring me to remember that we were both weak in health. I therefore gave her an order in the name of obedience to come to herself. O Divine Goodness! whose infinite charity deigned to obey such a wretched creature as I am! She came from her ecstasy immediately, but so exhausted that she seemed to have just undergone some painful labour, and said: "Ah, why not satisfy the desires of our God, who loves us with such an ardent love! We, who are His spouses, ought to live conformably to our sublime and holy state; but this is so little thought of!" I asked what our Lord required of us, and she replied: "God requires that souls who are consecrated to Him should divest themselves of themselves altogether; keeping their hearts entirely free from the spirit of the world, and having the courage to suffer much for the love of God. Souls thus purified should detach themselves from all created things, and never do the least thing through self-love, human respect, or any other motive that is not of God. Whoever has the direction of the souls of nuns should guide them in the way of that perfection proper to their state, and that with a real solicitude, for it is

most important that they should reflect upon what God has done for souls like ours. When a soul has once entered upon the way of perfection, with a will determined to serve and love God faithfully, He gives her courage and strength to overcome all the obstacles that the devil puts in the way, so that she attains to the possession of God. Believe me, Mother, this is the Will of God for all religious; why then is it not accomplished? Ah, the infinite love of God is little known and therefore little appreciated! Oh, how great is the love of God for one whom He has created in His own image! The cause of this great love is Love itself. This pure love makes us resemble angels, or rather gods. That deep love which is felt in the depth of the soul cannot be described . . . she only knows it who herself experiences it . . . but why not try to experience it? O Love, the souls who taste of Thee have a foretaste of Paradise. The soul is created by God for Himself, and can find no rest save in God. Mother, let us strive to make God more loved." I cannot give an idea of the impression which the language of this privileged soul made upon me. The night was now far advanced, so I told Mother Vicaress that we must retire to our cells; she obeyed, but she could not sleep . . . O my

dear Mother Vicaress, you knew that your time upon this earth was fast drawing to a close! Ah, how I now regret those hours I passed away from you when you were plunged in the enjoyment of God! After this for about five months our health prevented our continuing these vigils, to her great sorrow.

I saw that our dear sister was continually getting worse, and when I asked her what she felt, she replied: "I feel that I have much to go through before the end; but it is very little for the love of God." Oh, what heavenly words did I not hear from her lips when we were alone! Her beautiful soul was being transformed into God she seemed no more to belong to this world. It was in the month of May that I first became aware of the fatal malady to which our dear Mother Vicaress was to succumb. I called in medical advice at once; but for several months she was still able to be about, she even asked me to let her watch one more night for her poor sinners, and we fixed upon the 17th of September, Feast of the Stigmata of our seraphic Father St. Francis.

As soon as we reached the shrine of our holy Mother St. Clare, Mother Vicaress exclaimed, "O my seraphic, stigmatised Father, I entreat you to have compassion upon me!" And then, after some time

spent in silence, she began to exclaim with much vehemence, as one who is in great agony: "Oh, the pain I feel at my heart! Oh, those wounds of our Redeemer which St. Francis bears, seem now to be engraved upon my heart also! Ah, enough, enough, I cannot live. What is taking place in my heart? . . . What do I see? Ah, where am I?" Feeling the greatest pity for her state, I asked her what she felt, but her only reply was: "Oh, what a night this is!" Again I said: "What is happening to you, Mother Vicarress?" But she continued in her ecstasy, and only said: "My heart suffers a martyrdom . . . these wounds of our holy Father St. Francis, how much they make me suffer. . . . Oh no, life is not possible like this! . . . Oh, my God, finish your work quickly." Again she was silent, and gave no sign of life for a long time. Oh, what a grace was thus granted to my unworthiness! . . . No one could be there and not have some share. . . . Oh, mercies without number! . . . This beloved sister seemed plunged in a kind of celestial happiness, and even I felt to be no longer on earth, but this was not given to me on my own account, but in consideration of being with this privileged sister. Oh, what a foretaste of Paradise! . . . Seeing that it was already

very late, I reminded Mother Vicaress of the order of obedience, and she came to herself instantly. When I asked her how she felt, she said: "The moment is at hand when I shall be delivered from this body, then shall I be all in God and for God without let or hindrance." . . . This was the last night we passed together before the Blessed Sacrament and by the shrine of our holy Mother St. Clare.

In the month of November she became so ill that she had to keep her bed. During the Lent of the following year, 1870, she passed a night like those she had often spent in Choir. I will give the particulars. During the day I had seen that she was much disturbed by an interior doubt. I tried to calm her, but our Lord willed her to remain for some time a prey to this painful agitation. In the evening, when all the religious had retired for the night, I went to Mother Vicaress' cell to make a last effort to console her. I began to speak to her of God, and immediately she fell into one of her usual ecstasies; then she was seized with violent trembling, so that the bed shook under her; and in the midst of struggles and tears she exclaimed, "Why offend a God of such goodness and infinite love? Men have come to such a pitch that they seem to study how they can

offend their Creator most! Ah! why so much ingratitude? Mother, let us make some amends to God by loving Him more and more! Let us make sacrifices if we cannot give our lives for souls. Oh, how many souls are already lost, and how many others are on the point of being lost!"

Whilst thus speaking she had seized my hand with such violence that I feared she would dislocate it. I then asked her what I had to do on my part; and she replied: "Let us love God, and let us cause Him to be loved, for this is His Will. You are Superior, you ought to make your children love Him! Ah, that I could go through the entire universe, to make this God of love more known! Let us unite ourselves to so many souls who are labouring, and suffering, and working hard to save souls; many priests are doing this. Ah, how gladly would I join these sacred ministers of God if I could! Would that I might give even my life; but since this cannot be, let us go in spirit, to these places, Mother,—quick!" At these words she pulled my arm, as if to transport me whither she was conducted in spirit, but with so much force that I feared she would break it; and I exclaimed: "My dear Mother Vicarress, what are you doing?" She replied: "I am making you feel what God wishes." Then

suddenly her countenance changed, she spoke no more, but she still held my hand. All miserable and unworthy as I am of being a spouse of Jesus Christ, I was allowed to witness for my consolation the working of God in the heart of this, His faithful spouse. One thought, however, gave me uneasiness : I feared that all this mental exertion would increase her illness ; this made me recall her to consciousness. As soon as I had said, " Mother Vicaress, if it be the Will of God, come to yourself," she immediately opened her eyes ; saying at the same time, " We religious should study not to disgust God. Let us fulfil our duties more exactly. Little enough is required for this, and certainly it is not martyrdom." Again I asked her what God required of us, and she, always in a state of abstraction, repeated with much energy : " The spouses of Jesus, having entered into the privileged garden of religion, ought not only to forget, but moreover to hate the world ; it is thus that the heart is prepared to receive God and His graces. We must love, esteem, and desire in a very special manner the precious pearl of holy poverty, so strongly recommended to us by our Holy Mother. We have seen how our Beloved Spouse has always provided us with necessaries, and, although all has been taken from

us, we have never wanted for anything; therefore since we have a charitable Father, who thinks of everything, never let us seek or desire to have more than is necessary; it is very fitting we should feel sometimes the effects of holy poverty. Believe me, some things seem to us indispensable which are not so in reality. As Superior, do not be too yielding on this point, for it is easy to offend in this matter, and you will have to render a strict account to God. . . . We must have a horror of everything capable of offending the angelic virtue in the slightest degree, therefore it is never good to form inordinate attachments, even if they seem purely spiritual. All conversations which savour of the world, such as marriages, etc., should be abhorred, for we have abandoned the world. When a soul acts thus, God makes it taste of His grandeur, His goodness and His love; that which makes us desire only God as a pledge of true Divine love. Jesus wills us to love one another with a holy love; a pure and disinterested love as He Himself loves us. We ought never to pass unfavourable judgments, but mutually feel for one another's defects, and each should believe herself to have more faults than the others. If we do this, God will be always with us in the union of Divine grace. Oh,

union with God, what a word that is! We must, moreover, endeavour to accomplish the holy Will of God in all and through all, but with as much perfection as if God Himself commanded us this or that, in spiritual and temporal things, in prosperity, and adversity; if we act in this way Jesus will also do our will. We should accept with resignation all tribulations, temptations, desolations, persecutions, and privations, even taking satisfaction in these things; and then our sweet Jesus will find His delight in dwelling always with His faithful spouse. This must be tried to be fully believed." After thus speaking she was again absorbed in God, and maintained perfect silence. I left this dear sister for some time to enjoy her happiness in God without disturbing her. Perhaps God inspired me to do so because it was to be the last time that He communicated Himself in this way to her upon earth. When at length God allowed her to recover the use of her senses, she began again to speak, but always like a person who was half unconscious.


"Oh! the sublimity of our religious state," she said. "Let us ask of God these three graces: first, that true charity towards God and our neighbour may always be maintained amongst us; next, that the vow

of holy obedience may be observed with blind confidence, so that our Confessor and Superior be never looked upon as creatures, but as the representatives of God; the Mother Abbess ought to be in our eyes as Mother St. Clare herself, and the Father Confessor as Jesus Christ in person; lastly, that the vow of holy poverty be rigorously observed in its true perfection. Let us all ask to live according to the heart of God, in peace and in religious observance. My Jesus, water with Thy Divine grace this garden of choice flowers which Thou hast chosen; root out all evil weeds, and may Thy pure and holy love burn and dry up all that is not of Thee. May Thy spouses aspire after nothing but loving Thee, Who art our Sovereign Good. Ah, my God, make Thy spirit reign in each one of us! Oh! yes, the spirit of God demands a habitation worthy of Him; to prepare it for Him we must root out the pestilential weeds of self-love, then those other weeds—self-will, and love of our own opinion, which persuades us that we know all, and have no need of advice from any one; then pride, which makes us think we are fit for everything, and more capable than others. Humility is necessary to counteract all this. When the soul is thoroughly divested of self, she receives the Divine Spirit, and

becomes a channel of the grace of God." Then she fell again into a profound ecstasy, and remained deprived of her senses for a long time, as one dead. When it was near daybreak I said that if it were the Will of God, I desired the ecstasy might cease. Then suddenly coming to herself she let go my hand, saying: "Go and take some rest, for I see the night is already far advanced," upon which she closed her eyes. I said to her: "Mother Vicaress, do you not feel the need of some repose?" "How could I sleep?" she replied; "but I beg you will go and take some rest; as for me, I cannot just now." . . . She added a few words, which being for me personally, I pass over. . . . At her request I blessed her, and she said: "Go and rest a little, but remain united with me in the wound of the Sacred Side of Jesus—O my God!" In going away I begged, in the name of holy obedience, that she would try and sleep; she promised to obey, and in the morning she assured me that she had really done so.

CHAPTER X.

Of the Faith of Sister Mary Cherubina Clare.

UR dear Sister Mary Cherubina Clare had a lively faith which made her believe, without examination, all the truths of our holy religion. This virtue shone most conspicuously during her five years of dryness and temptation. I well remember that in the midst of all her sufferings, the violent temptations she had to sustain against faith were her greatest torment, and I am in a position to affirm that these temptations were extremely severe; nevertheless, she always persevered unshaken in the true faith, and wrote in her own blood the following protestation: "*Crede Cherubina Chiesa Catholica*" (the initial letters, as we see in her own writing, beginning with C, and meaning "Cherubina, believe the Catholic Church"). She persevered in the practice of all virtues with inviolable fidelity, and never halted for an instant in the way of perfection, nor

faltered in any of her duties. She often prayed for the propagation of the true faith, and more than once, on coming to herself after her transports of Divine love, she would exclaim, as if quite out of herself: "Ah! Why can I not go into distant countries where God is not known and teach the true faith? I ardently desire to shed my blood and give my very life for our holy faith, that all these souls may know God, and knowing Him may love Him!" She felt a holy envy of those missionaries who devote their lives to the propagation of the Faith. She has told me that it often seemed to her that she really was in an infidel country, sacrificing her life for the heathen, that these poor unfortunates, knowing God, might love Him. No words could give an idea of the ardour of that desire which consumed her, to shed her blood in order that God might be more known and loved. When she heard that certain missionaries had given their life for the Faith, her face became quite joyful, and, inflamed with holy desires, she would cry out: "May this happiness be my lot, to die that a God of love may be known and loved!"

Her lively faith made her realise the presence of God everywhere. Her actions were always regulated by this maxim: "God sees me"; and she passed

entire days, imperceptibly as it were, in the presence of God. From this resulted the profound sorrow she felt whenever she committed any fault, however small, and she would exclaim, with tears: "Alas, I have displeased that God who is always present to me!" In listening to sermons she never heeded the style of the preacher, but received with a lively faith the words which came from his mouth. She always showed the greatest respect for ecclesiastics, whether the ordinary or the extra-ordinary Confessors, for in them she saw God Himself. She had the greatest devotion towards our holy Father St. Francis and our holy Mother St. Clare, and entertained the highest esteem for holy things, as well as for souls particularly privileged by God. Whenever she heard of such a one, she sought to unite herself in prayer with this favourite of Jesus, and then her faith made her sure of obtaining all from God. Her faith in the merit of holy obedience was thoroughly practical, and showed itself more particularly when she felt that God was drawing her to Himself. On these occasions, if she could, she would obtain from the Father Confessor the merit and blessing of holy obedience, that nothing extraordinary should betray itself, and, thanks to her great faith, the operations of God remained hidden.

When she could not do this, she came to me, and God rewarded her faith which made her see God in her Superior, without thinking of my unworthiness. Every time she made special prayers and novenas to obtain graces either for herself or for others she was animated with such an earnest faith that she was a subject of edification to all. Her faith in the efficacy of the Holy Sacraments was most admirable, and although God permitted that, during the last ten months of her life, her spirit should be plunged in bitterness and desolation, her desire to receive Holy Communion was undiminished, saying that Jesus alone gave her strength to bear her many and grievous sufferings. On days when she did not communicate, she wished the religious who attended her, (for at times she could not be left alone for fear of suffocation,) to come near her bed as soon as they could after Holy Communion, that she might adore the sacramental presence of Jesus. "You are a holy Tabernacle!" she would exclaim; and this she often said to me. Even during the last few days of her life, when her illness became so alarming that she could not move, from the effusion of water on her chest, she still made an effort to rise up and adore Jesus in my heart, when she saw me enter her cell

after Holy Communion, and would send a kiss towards the Blessed Sacrament. These efforts, however, cost her so much that her breath would sometimes fail her altogether ; but her lively faith made her disregard her own sufferings.

God rewarded the faith of His spouse by enabling her to receive the last Sacraments and Absolution with perfect consciousness. Thus, even to her last sigh, as we shall see in its proper place, she was able to exercise her favourite virtue, which influenced all the actions of her life.

CHAPTER XI.


Of her Hope and Confidence in God.

THE beautiful virtue of hope and confidence in God was not among the least conspicuous of Sister Mary Cherubina's virtues. In our present trials she would often repeat, "Let us lean on God alone, and not on men." And although at times, particularly when she prayed for sinners, the devil would assail her with great violence, insinuating that she was in a state of reprobation, she never ceased to hope and confide in the Divine mercy. And during her five years' purgation this virtue shone with admirable lustre; for, although violently tempted to despondency and despair, she would confidently exclaim: "I trust in the goodness and power of my God; He fights for me." Leaning upon the merits of Jesus Christ she felt secure of her eternal salvation, and, indeed, so great was the account she made of this virtue that she looked upon it as a crime not to expect great things from God. Although her profound humility

made her esteem herself the greatest sinner in the world, she nevertheless never doubted that one day she would enjoy eternal beatitude. She spoke of heaven with such admirable confidence that one might have thought she already enjoyed its possession, and she said that diffidence on this point was an immense injury offered to the goodness and faithfulness of our God. She would add that having already offended God so much she would not increase her guilt by doubting His goodness and mercy. It was her unshaken confidence in God that made her abandon herself entirely into His hands, living in a total forgetfulness of herself, and trusting all to her Divine Spouse. Although she endured most cruel sufferings, she preferred to hope for her reward in Paradise, rather than seek to lessen her pains here. This same hope and confidence in God sustained her at the close of her life, when her heavenly Bridegroom deigned to try her by so terrible a malady that her spasms and anguish of body often reduced her to the last extremity, and, terrible as were her physical sufferings, her interior pains were very much more so, as she herself assured me. Thus did our Lord purify this dear Sister that she might be worthy of an eternal crown as soon as she had quitted this vale of tears.

CHAPTER XII.

Her Charity towards God.

O ardent was her love of God, that she could not think of the Passion and death of Jesus crucified without feeling her soul wrung with anguish. She never formed an act of Divine love without becoming so inflamed that her heart seemed to be on fire, and when she poured forth her soul in a burst of love she resembled a seraph. The heavenly favours she received from God excited within her a very furnace of love, which, by its vehemence, threw her into an ecstasy. As I have already related, she felt her heart wounded with love by her Divine Spouse. She often entreated priests to labour with greater zeal for the salvation of souls, and sometimes in the impetuosity of her love she would have wished to have traversed the whole world to spread amongst men the love of a God who so much deserves to be loved; in a word, she desired that all hearts should burn with

love for God. There were days when this Divine love made itself felt so keenly by her that being unable to resist its effects, her heart beat so violently that it seemed ready to leap out of her breast. This Divine fire which daily consumed her had reduced her body to a state of languor and suffering impossible to describe. The violent action of her heart took away her breath, so that she could not speak, and seemed in danger of suffocation. Very often I have left her looking like a corpse, and quite deprived of all power of moving. At times a picture or a word about God sufficed to throw her into an ecstasy. When she found herself unable to repress the emotions of her heart in the presence of others she quietly retired, and often in the refectory, where indeed she took very little nourishment, she was often obliged not to listen to the spiritual reading so that she might not lose the use of her senses.

It not infrequently happened that she came to my cell that I might bless her, because she felt incapable of resisting the force of Divine love, and would break forth into such exclamations as the following: " Ah, my God, I feel I am being burnt ; I cannot explain the sufferings of my heart ! What attacks are these ! What darts ! Ah, it is enough, I can bear no more !

I feel myself entirely plunged in God. Oh, what flame is this around my heart? I am burnt." When we spoke of God together she would say: "We must love God for His immense goodness and unspeakable charity; for His incomparable beauty, and for all the infinite titles He has to our love. Oh, my God, I love Thee, and I will love Thee alone, because Thou art infinitely worthy of being loved! I love Thee, and will love Thee always with a pure and disinterested love. Behold me, the victim of Thy love! Oh! beloved flames, gentle flames, amiable fire, which so often cause the blood in my veins to boil, make haste to consume me, that thus I may arrive at the perfect love of God."

This Divine love made her dread to commit the slightest fault. She was naturally of a lively disposition, and would amuse her Sisters by her gaiety and sprightliness, but often feared lest in this she should offend God; and so great was her delicacy of conscience in this matter that I often found her in tears, caused, as she told me, by the fear of having displeased a God of such infinite love. It was this sacred fear that inspired her with such a horror of sin, even the smallest; with such a scrupulous attention to avoid the least voluntary imperfection, and such purity of heart to

deplore every defect into which human frailty might cause her to fall, always seeking a remedy as soon as possible in the salutary bath of penance.

Moreover that constant endeavour not only to accomplish the Will of God, but to do what might be most pleasing to Him, that study not only to procure His glory but His greatest glory, that total absence of all esteem for the opinion of creatures, and entire abnegation of self, all this had its origin in her ardent love for God. In a word, her constant and sole desire and thought was to please her Beloved Spouse, Jesus, always more and more.

She was wont to say: "There is no better way of preserving and increasing Divine love than to suffer much for God; and, also, there is no clearer proof of Divine love than a great desire to suffer much for Him." We have already seen how much Sister Mary Cherubina Clare had to go through during those five years of trial, and later on we shall see how much she endured in consequence of having offered herself as a victim for the salvation of sinners, and for the cessation of the Divine chastisements with which she saw Italy and France afflicted. I conclude from all this that she was truly a martyr of love. Ah! in what terrible anguish was she not at times through the violence of

that Divine flame which her heart enclosed, and which sought to find vent, and to give a free course to its impetuosity. Ah! yes, to have in one's heart an ardent furnace of love, and to be unable to set it free; to experience the most violent emotions, and to be forced to repress them; to feel all burning with Divine love, and to be obliged, as it were, to stifle it without manifesting the least sign; to meet the Beloved everywhere, and to be constrained to flee from Him—this was the state of holy violence in which this soul, enamoured of God, lived for many years; a state which made her life a secret martyrdom, and consumed her precious existence before the time.

CHAPTER XIII.

Her Charity towards her Neighbour.

HER charity of Sister Mary Cherubina towards her neighbour was in perfect harmony with her love of God. Her heart was, at the same time, all for God and all for her neighbour, and she felt more for the sufferings of others than for her own. More than once have I seen her tears flow because she could not relieve the sufferings and the poverty of her neighbour. Her charity embraced first her Sisters, then the whole world. Sinners were the special objects of her solicitude, particularly those souls consecrated to God whom an interior light showed her to be living in a state of sin. I could never tell all she did by prayers and sufferings to gain these souls. I will say, however, that during the latter years of her life I have often heard her repeat, "My heart is rent by the knowledge that is given me of those souls who wilfully blind themselves; charity demands that we offer our prayers for their conversion."

One may say that she had placed herself between the justice of God and sinners. Before the revolution in poor Italy, she told me several times that she was seized with a mortal terror which caused her indescribable suffering; and when I asked her to explain herself, she said: "I see a bloody conflict approaching which will cause the loss of many souls for all eternity; and amongst them I see so many, even, who are priests! I cannot endure so bitter a grief! What would I not do to prevent so great an evil! Oh! would that by the shedding of my blood I could prevent such offences against God, and the loss of so many souls." She often exhorted priests to whom she had occasion to speak, to more earnest zeal for souls, reminding them of the inestimable Sacrifice of the Altar, which obtains all from God. She would sometimes say to me: "Oh, would that I could unite with all zealous priests to obtain the conversion of sinners, that so many souls should not be lost! My heart is breaking! Oh, the monstrous ingratitude of creatures towards their God! Such ingratitude is highly displeasing to our loving God. Each time this sin is committed the Sacred Heart of Jesus is wounded. Even souls consecrated to God are very deficient on this point, and it often causes their ruin."

Several priests have told me, during the lifetime of Sister Mary Cherubina, that they knew of many sinners won to God by the prayers of this holy soul, and surely such fervent prayers, inspired by the most sublime charity (for she had offered herself as a victim of expiation) could not ascend to the throne of Mercy and be unheard.

Early in the year 1866 she told me that she had much to suffer interiorly, and spoke of the cause of her pains in these terms: "Soon there will be a great loss of men, and, what is worse, a great loss of souls. Oh, how terrible to me is this thought!" She appeared at that time quite broken down by sorrow, and alike incapable of taking rest or food; when not with the Community she would sometimes exclaim: "Oh, what torrents of blood I see! Pity! O Lord, have pity! Ah! how can one live with such a terrific vision?"

During the Lent of 1867 she often said to me, "Let us pray, for the blood of many of our poor neighbours will be shed. Oh, how many victims! and then the souls which will be lost!" At these times she appeared to suffer a cruel martyrdom, for she knew in spirit the souls who were lost, and this knowledge was a mortal agony to her. What prayers,

what tears, what sacrifices did she not offer to God if she might redeem some !

In 1870, Mother Vicaress seemed to get a little better, and in the month of May she was sometimes able to go to Choir for Holy Communion, and our own doctor, as well as another medical man from Rome who was also consulted, assured us there was no danger, adding even that she would soon be cured. However, it was not to be so, for in July she became worse, and when I inquired of her the cause of this change, she replied ; “ Ah ! it is because this fearful war is not yet over ! Oh, what victims ! ” In the month of September her sickness so increased that she was reduced to a most pitiable condition, and she never rallied during the five months that intervened from that time till her death.

This charitable spouse of Jesus endured all her cruel martyrdom for her neighbour's good. Although she was plunged interiorly in thick darkness, she nevertheless used to assert that we must pray very much for the Church, affirming that still worse things would happen, and that therefore we ought to do violence to Heaven to obtain the Church's triumph and the conversion of sinners. Sometimes she would say to me : “ Oh, how many priests' souls are being

lost! I can do nothing now; in charity, do you see to it. Take care for the sanctification of your own children first, and then for the conversion of sinners." She had the greatest charity for all her Sisters who came to her in any trouble or affliction and would often sacrifice her short rest for the benefit of their souls.

And if the charity of this holy religious was so admirable in what related to spiritual things, it was not less so in the corporal necessities of her neighbour. And indeed she had the opportunity of exercising it on a large scale; for I, being nearly always ill, had several times given her full power to supply the wants of the Community and also those of the persons whom we employ; and with an admirable charity did she endeavour to provide every one with necessary clothing and food, etc., always considering the state of health of each, with due regard, however, to holy poverty. But this dear spouse of Jesus crucified did not confine her charity within the limits of the Monastery; she assisted all the poor who begged relief, and if she knew of any poor family ashamed to beg she took care to send them seasonable aid. Even during the fifteen months that she was confined to her bed, her tender solicitude for the poor never left

her, and she often reminded me of different persons who stood in need of assistance. Only a few weeks before her death, when she could hardly speak, she made an effort to say to me: "Mother, I am in want of nothing; but how can that poor man live?" naming someone she knew to be in distress, adding; "Pray send him something without delay." If I observed to her that she must not go too far, as we were now so poor ourselves, she would say; "Nothing will ever fail us in consequence of our charity to the poor." All that I have said shows plainly enough the great charity of this faithful soul towards our neighbour in this life. It now remains for me to relate something of her devotion to the suffering souls in Purgatory, for whom she felt the most lively compassion. Although for many years she suffered so much from a spinal affection that she was not able to remain standing without support, she nevertheless made many prayers day and night for these holy souls; and although her infirmity made the devotion of the Stations very painful to her, she would not desist from performing it several times a day for their relief, even in moments when her sufferings were so great that it was painful to see her walk. It often happened that she was all night through in too much pain to

get any rest; still, if she heard the bell ring for Mass at an unusually early hour, she would rise and assist at the Holy Sacrifice for the benefit of the holy souls in Purgatory. I sometimes begged her to have some consideration for her health, and not to rise before the regular time of the Community, but she would reply; "If you wish me to obey I am ready to do so, but if you allow me to rise for Mass, the holy souls will be the gainers." I gave her the desired permission, and she continued to rise almost every day an hour before the Community, until she was obliged to keep her bed entirely. This hour was devoted to the holy souls. She often asked me to get Masses said for their relief; saying that God would provide the necessary means. She sometimes made me know what were the pains of these souls, speaking as if she were really in Purgatory. One day amongst others she described this place of torment in these terms:—

Every soul on quitting this world in the grace of God knows that she is in a state of true charity; she is sure of never more offending God; she knows that soon she will enter into possession of that God whom she tenderly loves, and whom she will love unveiled throughout eternity. This knowledge of God pro-

duces in her an intense regret of having offended Him; such a regret as she had never experienced before in the whole course of her life. The soul seeing that her state prevents her uniting herself to God, and that this obstacle can only be removed by Purgatory, casts herself therein with all the impetuosity of that love which urges her to union with the Sovereign Good. The sufferings of Purgatory are indescribable, and yet, the soul who sees herself stained, though but slightly, would rather throw herself into hell than see in herself these stains that hinder her union with God. As soon as she reaches Purgatory she forgets everything, but has nevertheless continually present to her the object of infinite beatitude. She knows that God bears her an infinite love, that He recognises her for his daughter and well-beloved spouse, and that ere long he will clasp her to His bosom, and this thought causes her the most intense pain. She feels an immense love for her God, and still she understands that as yet she cannot satisfy her longing to see and enjoy Him. She loves Him with the most ardent love, and the impossibility of being united to her Beloved gives her intense grief, and this grief is greater in proportion as the love of which God has made her capable

is more perfect. Therefore Divine love may be said to have created Purgatory."

"O Divine Love, you are more than Purgatory; you burn, you consume, you end by killing! O Love! What the souls suffer in Purgatory I feel within myself. I see my soul shut up in my body as in a Purgatory, for it feels itself transported towards the Sovereign Good, it is burning with the flame which draws it to God and still is unable to unite itself to Him. Ah, how like to the real Purgatory is the Purgatory love creates in this life! He only can understand it who himself experiences it." Her eyes as she spoke were raised upwards; she seemed to be in a sort of ecstasy, and repeated several times, "Purgatory, Purgatory, make thyself known!"

God often made her acquainted with the state of the souls for whom she prayed, which increased her fervour and zeal for their deliverance. One of our Sisters, an excellent religious, made a most edifying end, and we hoped that she would go straight to heaven: but Mother Vicaress told us she was suffering in Purgatory: several months afterwards I again asked her, and she made me this answer: "Mother, if you did but know how pure a soul must be for union with God! Our poor Sister is still deprived of this

Sovereign Good, whom she already knows and loves immensely ; she often makes herself felt by me, that I may console her ; let us endeavour to hasten her eternal joy." At the end of the year I renewed my question, and again received the same answer ; she added that this soul was often near her, both day and night. She told me also of other Sisters who, after death, made their helpless condition known to her, and doubtless she greatly accelerated their release, for she gave them a large share in all her prayers, mortifications and sufferings, until she knew that their Purgatory was ended. A brother of one of our religious having died, each time Mother Vicaress made the Stations of the Cross, he came to recommend himself to her, and one night he told her that if he had lived longer he should have been lost ; because, through human respect, he had not obeyed the Divine Will regarding his state of life. We afterwards learned from his parish priest that this young man had felt inspired to become a priest, but had resisted. Some time after this, his sister asked Mother Vicaress if he were still in Purgatory ? On my obliging her to answer this question, she replied that this soul was indeed still suffering.

A certain bishop, who had led a holy life, died ;

the whole Community prayed for the repose of his soul, and each sister continued to offer up prayers for his relief for a long time. Still Mother Vicareess was continually reminding us of this soul, saying he still needed prayers, because he had been at the head of a diocese. One day, she told me that this soul had appeared to her the preceding night with a very sorrowful aspect, and had said to her, "I am come to ask you for help, see how I burn, do give me some relief." He then showed her his hands grievously burnt, because he had imposed them upon unworthy subjects at ordinations, etc. She added, that I ought to procure relief for this blessed but suffering soul, which I did. After some time, she told me that the bishop had again appeared to her and had told her that he was no longer in need of prayers. She often had knowledge of the state of the deceased parents of our Sisters, and of the length of time which yet remained to them to pass in Purgatory, and not content with praying much for them herself, she begged me also to procure them relief. She would often say, "If we understood what Purgatory is, we should be more solicitous to deliver the holy souls. Purgatory! how terrible thou art!" This supernatural knowledge made her entertain a great dread of having to remain

long there, and she asked that prayers should be said for her immediately after her death. The last day of her life she said to me, "Mother, Purgatory terrifies me; do think to procure my deliverance from thence as soon as possible. As Superior you have the power to do this." And, truly, we have a firm hope that, in reward for her charity, God will have granted her a speedy entrance into heaven.

CHAPTER XIV.

*Her Special Love towards the Most Blessed
Sacrament.*

FROM all that Sister Mary Cherubina Clare told me, I saw clearly that her life was a life of love towards Jesus, her Spouse, and that, as a natural consequence, she had the most ardent love for that mystery of love—the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. From her tender years she understood in an admirable manner that all the mysteries of God's infinite Love towards us poor creatures, are contained in the Adorable Eucharist. She was wont to say that the Divine Eucharist was the strength of her soul, and the pledge of her eternal happiness. And although she ardently sighed after Holy Communion, she acknowledged herself, as she often told me, most unworthy of it. At the moment of Holy Communion this feeling of unworthiness made her tremble, at the same time that the ardent aspirations of her burning

soul would have urged her to receive many times in the day, had that been possible. In a conference I had with her, I learned the consolations that inundated her soul during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and particularly at the time of Holy Communion. I will give her own words: "From my earliest childhood," she said, "I was attracted towards Jesus, and felt an earnest desire to receive Him as soon as possible in Holy Communion, in order to be more intimately united to my God, to be one with Him, that is to say, to feel Jesus in me, and I in Jesus. I pictured to myself that it was no longer I, but Jesus who lived in me. When, at the age of eleven years, I had the happiness of making my First Communion, this thought gave me so much consolation, that I burst into tears as soon as I had received the Sacred Host; then I no more belonged to myself, but I remained, as it were, quite out of myself during the Mass and thanksgiving." Several times after this she made known to me the transports she felt towards the most Holy Sacrament. All her free time she passed at the feet of Jesus. Jesus hidden under the Eucharistic veil was the object of her dearest delights. Though oppressed and exhausted by suffering, she was always ready at the hour of Holy Communion, unless quite

incapacitated from moving; and though she could hardly drag herself along, she continued her visits to the Blessed Sacrament. When I was obliged to forbid her going to Choir, on account of her infirmities, she may truly be said to have suffered a martyrdom. This Divine Sacrament was as a centre towards which her thoughts and affections were continually turned. We often saw her during her visits to the Blessed Sacrament immovable as a statue, and in ecstasy. Two and three consecutive hours passed as a moment. At these times, and particularly after Holy Communion, she had the most sublime communications with God. She often spoke of the ardent love of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and of the great happiness which we religious enjoy of living in His company, of visiting Him often, and receiving Him daily. When Jesus was exposed on the Altar she could not bear to be a moment out of His Sacred Presence. She called Thursday the day of love. Her great desire was to spend the greater part of this night, and even the whole night before the Blessed Sacrament, meditating upon the immense charity of Jesus, in the institution of this mystery of love, before going to the Garden of Olives, where He suffered His agony and bloody sweat for our salvation. Oh, how

often did we not see her deprived of her senses at the moment of Holy Communion! Obedience alone gave her power to walk and open her mouth. She has sometimes told me that she did not know how she either left her place or returned to it again, being quite unconscious of things around her, and absorbed in God; she could not explain what she felt at these times of ineffable union with Jesus her Beloved Spouse.

CHAPTER XV.

Her Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus ; to our Blessed Lady, the Mother of Dolors ; to the Holy Patriarch St. Joseph ; and to our Holy Founders.

THE devotion of Sister Mary Cherubina Clare to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was quite extraordinary even among the religious of this Monastery who devote themselves specially to the worship of this Adorable Heart. In the year 1869 she entreated that a picture of the Sacred Heart might be exposed during the feast in the exterior Church, and she spared no pains to give the greatest solemnity to this celebration. . . . The following year, which was her last, although confined to her bed, she did all in her power to obtain the solemn celebration of this feast, and her wish was gratified ; for, besides several low Masses, we had High Mass, and in the afternoon Benediction of the most Blessed Sacrament in presence of a great concourse of people. She gave

particular thanks to our Divine Lord for granting her this grace before her death.

From her childhood she had always entertained a tender devotion to the Passion of Jesus, and in religion this became her favourite subject of meditation. So deeply did she penetrate into these painful mysteries that often she relapsed into unconsciousness at the mere recollection. From the night of Thursday till the hour of the Saviour's death the sufferings of Jesus, her Spouse, were always present to her. She often said that the anguish of His Divine Heart was His most cruel torment. And truly it was love for His creatures which made Him sweat blood, endure all the torments of His Passion, die, and then suffer His Sacred Side to be opened with a lance. So great was the devotion of this faithful spouse of Jesus towards the sufferings of His Adorable Heart that to mention the mystery before her was often enough to send her into an ecstasy. During Holy Week she remained plunged in contemplation of the dolorous scenes the Church puts before us, but though she followed our Lord step by step, as it were, yet did she stop at each to contemplate attentively the operations of Divine love in the Heart of the Man-God.

She told me that in meditating upon the Divine operations of the Heart of Jesus, she felt herself lost in this Ark of love, and the pain she felt, had it continued long, must have caused death. Once only I asked her to describe this pain ; she replied, " Jesus is at work in my heart, causing me such pain that I could scream." She said no more. I felt that I ought not to insist upon a more minute explanation. How she would have rejoiced could she have caused this intense love of the Divine Heart to be felt by all those who are consecrated to God ; because, by the medium of this Heart, which is the seat of love, the soul will love her God more and more, and if she correspond faithfully to the graces this Divine Heart bestows upon her, she will become a saint. She used to say, " It would be very pleasing to Jesus if religious would consecrate themselves by a written act to this Divine Heart, and often renew this consecration when they renew their holy Profession. The act might be presented to the Sacred Heart through the Superior invoking the aid of the most holy Virgin Mary, of our holy Father St. Francis, who was so devout to this Divine Heart, and of our holy Mother St. Clare, that most pure dove who so often withdrew into the sacred wounds of this sweet and most Amiable Heart."

A soul so enamoured of Jesus could not but love His holy Mother most ardently. She celebrated all the feasts of the Blessed Virgin with great solemnity; even when still in the world, she prepared herself for them by various practices of devotion, fasts, and other mortifications. She had a special devotion to our Lady of Dolors, and on Friday and Saturday she kept company with this Sorrowful Mother, contemplating her bitter grief and her profound desolation. She had an intense desire to know all the sufferings which this Queen of Martyrs endured when the fearful Sacrifice of the Cross was being consummated; at length she was heard, and each time that her soul was, as it were, drowned in the sufferings of Jesus, she was shown also the desolation and mortal anguish of the Divine Mother, to whom no one offered the smallest consolation. She could never find words to express what she understood of the sufferings of Mary. She had also a great love and veneration for the Holy Patriarch St. Joseph, and had recourse to him in all her necessities with the greatest faith, and recommended others to do the same. When any of the religious were sick she would urge me to seek the intercession of St. Joseph in their behalf. She constantly addressed herself to him in our

present troubles, in behalf of the Sovereign Pontiff, of our holy Mother, the Church, and to obtain the conversion of sinners. During her long and painful malady she never ceased to invoke this glorious Saint, but most particularly when the doctor ordered a surgeon to be called in, that an operation might be performed by which he hoped to save her life, which was greatly endangered by the violence of the spasms from which she was then suffering. Pain was that which was least to be dreaded in the operation; our saintly Sister shuddered at what was before her: but, taking in her hands the picture of St. Joseph, she entreated him with such lively faith to spare her this agony that she was heard. The Wednesday immediately preceding her death, and indeed every day latterly, she implored his assistance with great earnestness for her last hour. Three years before her death, she begged me to give a dinner to three poor persons on his feast (the 19th of March), in honour of the Holy Family: this I did very willingly, choosing for this purpose the carpenter of the convent, his wife, and son, who were very poor. Mother Vicarress herself prepared the dinner, and carried it to the "turn" the first year, but the following March she was already confined to her

bed ; however, she rose to carry to the parlour the coffee taken after dinner, and she even came to Choir for vespers in honour of the Saint. When her sickness was at its worst she had the picture of the Holy Family placed upon her bed that she might always venerate what she called her sacred trio.

The great devotion she felt towards our holy founders from her first entrance into religion went on increasing with her years ; she greatly venerated their pictures which were in her cell, and, before her clothing, had ardently longed to receive their much-loved names. Our Lord granted her pious desire, for, as we have already seen, she was called Sister Mary Cherubina Clare of St. Francis. She celebrated their festivals with great devotion, and many times a day prostrated herself before the shrine of our glorious and holy Mother ; and although the effort was very painful to her suffering back, she, nevertheless, passed hours both day and night on her knees by these sacred relics. During the first years of the revolution which disturbed the peace of our unfortunate country, we were in great fear of being turned out of our Convent, but Mother Vicaress did not share our alarm. Her implicit trust in the powerful protection of our holy Mother, made her even reproach our

want of confidence. Once I said to her, half laughing, "But, Mother Vicaress, are you quite sure of not having to leave our beloved Convent, that you live on in such tranquillity? Take care, perhaps you may be deceived!" She answered, "A few days after the change of Government, my most dear Mother assured me that I should not have to go out." When she saw anyone particularly timid, she would recommend her to have confidence in the protection of St. Clare; saying that this good Mother is always ready to listen to us, that she obtains for us many graces from God, and that she will give us a special help at the hour of our death.

Her joy was quite remarkable whenever our seraphic Father was spoken of; she called him the gate which opens the way to the contemplation of Jesus' suffering. "When we love Jesus," she would say, "we love also the seraph of love, because we contemplate in his person our Sovereign Good, the Crucified Jesus, a Crucified Father, a Crucified Spouse. Oh, shall we not be crucified also? But who feels this in his heart?" During the novena, preparatory to the feast of our glorious Father, the 4th of October, she increased her exercises of devotion, her acts of mortification and of charity, and spent in prayer nearly

the whole night before the feast. The festival itself she passed in a loving contemplation of the glory of our seraphic Father. She would say that the glory to which he is exalted is not only very great, but is also quite peculiar, on account of his ardent love for Jesus crucified, and that there is no saint in heaven who so closely resembles the sacred humanity of Jesus. In his birth, in his whole life, but most especially during his last years, he was the true image of our Divine Redeemer. The Feast of the Stigmata, 17th of September, was also a great day with her. We used to pass the preceding night before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and by the shrine of our glorious Mother. Oh, what hours these were! Notwithstanding my misery and my unworthiness, I was allowed to witness the operations of God's mercy in this faithful soul. She would speak as if really in presence of our seraphic Father. She recommended to him her Sisters and the two other Communities living with us, all the children of the seraphic family throughout the world, and every one who was united to her in prayer. Then she prayed for poor sinners, entreating our holy Father to recommend them all to God, in memory of the great grace he had that day received from our Lord. But

most especially did she pray for those priests and religious whom she knew to be in a perilous state, and among whom some belonged to the divers families of the seraphic Father. Then, filled with a burning ardour, she would exclaim, "O seraph of love, remember the charity which during life you felt for your neighbour; remember all the labours, long journeys, and sufferings you underwent to draw souls to God. . . . God has imprinted upon you the signs of our redemption. Obtain, then, this, a new redemption; obtain, by the merits of your sacred stigmata, that many of your sons, who are unmindful of what they have vowed to God, may be converted. Obtain, that many priests and Superiors of souls, who are now living in open sin, may return to the right road; that their grievous offences against God may thus cease, and that our neighbour may be no more scandalised. Ah, refuse not my petition! I recommend to you the Sovereign Pontiff, that he may be spared to see the complete triumph of the Church. I recommend to you also most especially those whom you have given me as the guides of my soul, my Father Confessor, and our Superioress. O my glorious, stigmatised Father, may they both burn with your seraphic love for God and man, and may the Divine

Will be accomplished in them, and by them. O my dear, holy Father, bless those three great souls who are here united in spirit; bless us all, and may this blessing open the gate of heaven to us all!" After she had finished this prayer, she became rapt in ecstasy, and remained so for a long time, looking like a corpse. When I felt inspired to do so, I commanded her in the name of obedience to come to herself; she immediately obeyed, and all on fire with love for the seraphic Patriarch, broke forth in the following words, "What an admirable Father we have! Ah, these prints of the nails miraculously formed by love! Holy Mother St. Clare, who wast the first to see these signs of love, tell us what impression they made upon thy seraphic heart? Oh, how happy wast thou!" The precious plaster, worn by our holy Father over the wound of his blessed side, remains exposed to the veneration of the religious during the whole of this feast, and emits a most delightful smell. A perfume is always perceptible from it, but on the 4th of October it is more powerful than usual, and on the 17th September much stronger. Our fervent sister passed several hours of the night of the 17th rapt in the contemplation of this precious relic. "Oh, what a treasure!" she would

exclaim. "Our holy Mother prepared it, and our seraphic Father wore it over the wound which love formed in his side. O loving wound, I venerate and love you ardently. I also have a share in this sweet pain; I thank you for it. Ah, would that all could experience it!"

These few details will make the holy soul's devotion to our beloved founders sufficiently manifest to all.

CHAPTER XVI.

Supernatural Favours Granted to Her by God.

THAT was easy to recognise the humility of Sister Mary Cherubina Clare by the mean opinion she had of herself, for she considered herself unworthy of the favours she received from God, and was ingenious in concealing them; sometimes by making little jokes, or speaking and acting in a childish way; or by seeming to amuse herself with the young religious; or by breaking forth into little impromptus during recreation, etc. Her great aim was to make herself appear ridiculous. On the days when she was more than usually absorbed in God, some of the Community (those who were or had been under her direction) soon perceived it, and, through devotion, would try to get near to her; but as soon as she noticed it, she put on a sort of rough, uncourteous manner, or spoke in a playful childish way, that she might be taken for a half-witted or ill-bred

person. But although she might succeed in making those who knew her least believe that, though good and regular in observance, she was quite unfit for the office she held, those who had been brought up under her guidance were not so easily deceived. She wished to be unknown even to the extra-ordinary Confessors, who, according to custom, came twice a year to the Convent, and she used to ask the blessing of the Confessor of the Community that this might be. She prayed earnestly to God to obtain that what He operated in her soul might be unknown, and she be humbled and despised. She often said that God bestowed these extraordinary graces upon her for her conversion, as she was a great sinner who merited hell; she wondered that her Sisters could endure to be near her. She sometimes said to me that the favours of God made her blush; she even thought they must be a delusion of Satan, for God, she would say, is not wont to bestow His graces upon such ungrateful souls. But God was only rewarding the humility of His beloved spouse.

We have seen that after passing through the different states of prayer she received the gift of contemplation; that ecstasies and the absorption of her soul in God were frequent; that she often

enjoyed the most intimate union with her Divine Spouse; that He had even contracted with her special espousals, and that many times her heart had been wounded by His love. She possessed not only the gift of prophecy, but things and places afar off were as if actually present to her; she could sound the depth of men's hearts and read their most secret thoughts.

She was supernaturally forewarned of the Italian Revolution, and wept over the horrors which were to flow from it. She knew of all the massacres, wars, and other calamities by which an irritated God would chastise the sins of His people. She saw the bloody war of 1866, in Northern Italy, and that of 1867, which ended at Mentana. She learned nothing of all this from men, but Divine inspiration made known to her the coming of these terrible events, and the deplorable loss of many souls. She predicted to several young persons who wished to enter our Convent that they would never do so, but would settle in the world, and they did so. She announced to one of her novices that she would soon make her holy Profession, although there seemed no human probability of this solemn act taking place, and the poor novice was plunged into great grief on this account; however she was soon

consoled by the prophecy of her saintly Mistress coming true. She predicted of one of our Choir Sisters, who had received the last Sacraments, and was declared by the doctor to be within a few hours of her death, that she would recover. When Mother Vicaress saw my distress about this religious, she said to me ; “ You cry and I laugh, because this Sister will outlive me by several years.” This took place about eleven years ago, and that Sister is now alive and well. She predicted that after her death the relics of our glorious Mother St. Clare would be translated into the new subterranean chapel built under the church of the Monastery. We could not then see any sign of such a thing taking place, for the chapel was very far from being finished, and, considering the unhappy state of Italy, we could not expect the necessary alms to be forthcoming. However, the generosity of Count George of Nedonchel-Choiseul, of Belgium, who came most unexpectedly to our aid, triumphed over all our difficulties, and the chapel was completed entirely at his cost ; when the longed-for translation took place.*

* This translation took place on the 3rd of October 1872, with great solemnity. A full account of these interesting particulars may be seen in the 3rd edition of the Abbé Demore's beautifully written “Life of St. Clare,” in French, and in the French edition of this translation.

About five months before her death she predicted that the Confessor of the Community would be confirmed in his charge which took place three months after her death, and also that I should be re-elected, which also occurred about a month after her death. She could see into the hearts of many of our Sisters. I know this by my own experience ; for one day I told her to pray particularly for my intention and to tell me under obedience the inspiration she received upon the subject. She prayed for three days, and then, overcoming the repugnance caused by her humility, she described everything as exactly as if she could look into my inmost heart; yet they were matters known to none save me and God. One of our Sisters was ill in her bed, and feared that she would never be able to leave it; one evening she interiorly asked our Lord to let her know by some sign if she were to die of that illness or not. No one knew of her prayer. The next morning, however, Mother Vicarress went to her bedside and said, " Last night you wanted a sign; but I can assure you that you will not die of this illness." This happened eight years ago, and this religious is now alive and well. She attended Mother Vicarress in her last illness, and was with her when she died. At one time a most

excellent religious was grievously tormented by the devil. Mother Vicaress saw the interior suffering of this soul, and told me to pray particularly for her, that the enemy might be confounded. I could scarcely believe it at the time, but I found out afterwards that this good Sister was in the state described by Mother Vicaress. Several other religious were helped by her prayers quite unknown to themselves, for she would often come and say to me: "As you hold the place of God it is well for you to know the state of your children, that you may aid them by your prayers; be sure that God is obliged to listen to them; if it were not so, I should not confide to you what I know about our Sisters. I should think it contrary to charity."

A religious said to her one day, "Mother Vicaress, What do you say to what I am thinking? 'Yes' or 'No?'" "This yes or no," replied Mother Vicaress, "I cannot tell you now; let me make a triduum about it, then I will tell you." On the third day of the triduum, as she was coming down from the Choir, Mother Vicaress saw the religious who had asked her the question, and taking her hand she said to her with great joy, "Yes, yes, yes." Then she told me the whole affair, although, as I learned from

the Sister in question, no one could in a natural way have known anything about it. She said to one of her pupils, who had been with us ever since the change of Government, that she should receive the holy habit within three years. This seemed quite unlikely, because on account of present troubles her father had several times refused his consent: however, a fresh request being made to him, he at last yielded, to the great joy of his child, who was then clothed in the poor habit of the Seraphic Order. She also told us that our Noviciate would be renewed in three years, though circumstances did not seem to render this likely, and moreover no subjects ever presented themselves. But now, quite unexpectedly, several young persons have begged to join our Community, five of whom will enter shortly and others will follow them. She predicted also the election of our new bishop, although it was generally supposed that vacant sees would not be refilled under existing circumstances, and that even then there would not be another Bishop of Assisi. The contrary, however, has taken place.

Mother Vicaress had also the gift of bilocation. Thus in 1869 she appeared to a Conventual Father residing at Oria; I was convinced of this by the exact

description of Mother Vicaress given me by this religious, who had never seen her, though she had often written to him. One night a few weeks before her death the Sister who was watching by her bed, thinking she might be in want of something, for she had been quiet for an unusually long time, called her by her name. Immediately Mother Vicaress exclaimed, half unconsciously, "Oh, what a beautiful sight I was then enjoying!" And upon the good Sister pressing her to explain herself, she added: "I saw the Blessed Virgin and a great number of holy virgins passing by in procession, and they looked at me and I said to them, *Trahe me post Te, in odorem unguentorum tuorum*. Oh, what a joy!" The poor infirmarian was unhappy that she had interrupted her heavenly vision, but Mother Vicaress reassured her with her usual sweetness and gentleness.

CHAPTER XVII.

*Her severe Suffering during her Last Days, and her
holy Death.*

AFTER the feast of the Stigmata, September 17, 1868, Mother Vicaress told me that her Heavenly Bridegroom had assured her that He could not long delay her perfect union with Himself in heaven, but that she must first undergo a severe martyrdom. And although she often told me that soon she would leave me and be with her God, I thought, judging by her state of health, that she would still live several years. She constantly urged me, however, to pray that she might be able to bear the sufferings which were in store for her, at the mere thought of which she shuddered, fearing lest her power of endurance should give way when they really came. This mental anguish continued, with short intervals of rest, till the following January, when bodily sickness was added to her other sufferings.

For five months she concealed her malady, and, even when obliged to make it known, continued to follow the exercises of the Community. Early in the month of November, however, she was forced to keep her bed, and for fifteen months her sufferings of mind and body were incessant. Besides the dysentery, from which she had been suffering for nearly a year, she was now a martyr to spasms, giddiness, and a burning fever; whilst the weakness of her stomach caused her to reject with indescribable agony almost all she swallowed. She suffered, too, from severe headaches, brought on by want of sleep, so that the least noise distressed her. During the last few months of her life she had constant violent convulsions, with a disgust for all food; and she was reduced to such a state of exhaustion as often to seem at the very point of death. Then dropsy, brought on by excessive weakness, rendered her breathing difficult, and threatened suffocation whenever she moved. Her sufferings were so intense that often, in spite of her perfect resignation, she broke forth into sighs and groans. Fearing to lose her patience she would ask the infirmarian, with many tears, to pray that she might have strength to suffer without offending God. But all her physical torments

bore no comparison to the agony of her soul, for desolation was the more grievous to her as she was accustomed to enjoy the sweet delights of Divine union. Now it was as if the heavens were of brass and her prayers disregarded ; so bitter was her chalice that, fearing even for her salvation, she entreated her Sisters to beg mercy for her from God. Formerly she had thirsted for sufferings, and now it seemed to her that her pains were the punishment of her sins, which, small as they were, appeared enormous in her eyes. Sometimes she would say to me with touching earnestness : “ What do you really think? shall I ever be saved? I have offended my God so grievously. Ah! how the thought of appearing before the dread tribunal of a God of Justice terrifies me!” She could not remember the special graces and extraordinary favours which God had bestowed upon her ; she saw nothing but her sins, and in her extreme desolation she once said to me that she feared God had abandoned her. It was like the cry of Jesus on the cross :

“ Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me? ”

Notwithstanding the violence, the long continuance and the variety of her sufferings, she was always patient and resigned, repeating often, “ May God’s

will be done." For the last three months of her life she was unable to move in bed without excruciating pain, but was constantly lying on her right side. When I asked her about herself, she answered, "My whole body is in pain, but may the holy Will of God be done ; I ask only for patience and strength to bear my sufferings."

Her extreme weakness made it very difficult for her to receive Holy Communion, for fasting brought on excessive faintness ; so much so that I sometimes suggested to her to abstain from this heavenly banquet, but she would answer : "I cannot have the happiness that you have of communicating every day, but if it were to cost me my life I would still not omit Holy Communion ; true it is, I do not enjoy any sensible consolation, but I know that it gives me strength to suffer with patience, and this is what I so much want." During the last two months of her life, when she was constantly in danger of death, she received Holy Communion by way of Viaticum, and consequently more rarely ; this she thought was permitted by God on account of her unworthiness.

On the 6th of December she was so ill that the doctor advised her to receive the Last Sacraments. To this she joyfully consented, and the following morning

begged her Confessor to ask pardon, in her name, of the Community for all her faults and the bad example she had given them; to thank all the religious for their charity towards her, and assure them that she would continue to love them in heaven. The Father Confessor repeated all this in a loud voice, for she was unable to speak so as to be heard by all the Sisters. The whole Community were in tears whilst the priest proceeded to administer the Last Sacraments to our dear sufferer. As soon as she had received the Holy Viaticum a slight change for the better was perceived in her, but she still continued at the very point of death.

The doctor affirmed that she had no blood left in her veins: the dropsy was daily becoming more and more alarming; her face, hands, and whole body were fearfully swollen; a burning thirst consumed her, and she could take nothing to cool it, for even a spoonful of liquid endangered her life, as it was invariably rejected with agonising pain; spasms in her head prevented her from opening her eyes, and made it painful for her even to hear anyone speak; every part of her body, in fact, caused her the most excruciating suffering.

She passed night after night with scarcely any

rest; the mere act of breathing drew from her moans and sighs. It was really heart-rending to be with her; the doctor himself could not bear the sight; and it seemed as if God allowed her to remain on earth only to suffer. She recommended herself to all the priests she knew, that they might assist her by their prayers, promising to remember them in heaven.

One day she begged me not to oblige her to try any more remedies; and when I insisted that it was my duty to try every means to relieve her, she added that she felt so incapable of taking anything, that to force her to do so would be to expose her to the danger of being choked by sickness. She also told me that besides her excessive corporal sufferings, she was overwhelmed with interior crosses, for, like Jesus abandoned on the cross, she was dying deprived of all consolation, and given up to the most complete dereliction of spirit. Five days before her death I spent about an hour alone with her; she was sobbing bitterly, and said to me through her tears: "You are my mother, do help your dying child." I told her that I would do all in my power for her, that I would give my life for her, if it were possible, if I could thereby afford her any relief. She then added, "I suffer a martyrdom in my body, but my interior state

is much more painful. I suffer so much that I can resist no longer. Ah! in pity pray, and get the others to pray for your poor child, for, indeed, I am in great need of help."

Seeing the profound desolation of this cherished soul, I reminded her of the graces and favours she had received from God, and of which I had sometimes been the witness; but she could remember nothing of all these things, and almost choked by her tears she said, "Perhaps all this has been but a delusion of the devil. I do not think that it could be from God; I am too great a sinner. I entreat of you to pray to God for me, that He may have mercy upon me, and sustain me in my sufferings, which are very great; but compared to my sins, they are as nothing. I merit hell, but prayer will obtain my pardon. Ah, if you only knew how differently we view things at the hour of death! Then all attachments, all that is human, the earth and all creatures, are forgotten. God and the soul alone remain; our desires, our will, our knowledge and estimate of things are quite changed from what they were. Ah, if I were to recover I would begin to lead a life of real sanctity!" I reminded her that she had always conformed her conduct to holy obedience, and that therefore as her Superior

I could say to her she had every reason to be at peace. "Yes, it is true," she replied, "I do not recollect having ever acted contrary to obedience, and in obeying I have ever had the intention of pleasing God; but now I see clearly all the virtues which a spouse of the Crucified Jesus ought to practise. What purity of intention, what entire detachment, what humility in her words, in her actions, in her judgment of others, but above all, in her interior conviction that she is the most imperfect of all! Hence flows that true charity which embraces all virtue. We ought to desire only God, aspire only after God; and, except through pure necessity, speak only of God. No thought of the world should ever be entertained. We must only pray that all, especially our own family, may be saved. We should make no account of honours, indulge in no susceptibilities; I repeat it, we should seek God alone—God and the soul—all the rest is vanity. I can say no more,—pray for me." These words were spoken with an earnestness that went to my very soul, and made a lasting impression upon my mind. She was much fatigued, and soon one of her painful attacks came on; after a short time she asked me what day it was. On my telling her that it was Friday, the 26th of January,

she added, "Then what was to have been for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin will be for her Purification."

Her sufferings continued to increase; her only food was the Blessed Sacrament, which she was allowed to receive on three consecutive days. After Holy Communion on the Monday she asked for Extreme Unction, as she greatly wished to receive this Sacrament in a state of consciousness; her request was granted. She presented her hands to be anointed with great devotion, and during the whole ceremony appeared profoundly recollected. When all was over she took her crucifix in her hands; asked for the picture of the Holy Family to be placed upon her bed, and those of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and of our seraphic Father and Mother, to be fastened to the wall towards which she was turned, saying that these were her only consolation. Then she wished to speak to me alone, and said: "If you are willing, Mother Abbess, will you let my cousin know that I am dying? I am sure he would ask the Holy Father to give me the Absolution in *articulo mortis*; and tell my poor mother also. Do all as seems best to you, for I can think only of my soul. And now I beg of you to pardon me all the trouble

and annoyance I may have caused you, and I thank you for all your charity towards me. I now wish to remain alone with my crucifix and my holy patrons. Keep up your courage, Mother, as well as you can, for we shall all die; as I have helped you on earth, so shall I help you in heaven. Bid all my Sisters adieu for me, and also the other two Communities, for I cannot speak to all; tell them I shall remember them in heaven." After a few moments of silence, the violent retching again returned, the effort of speaking had been too much for her; in her anguish she kept repeating, "Pray for me." And when I asked her if her interior sufferings continued she told me that although she was quite tranquil, she was in the most profound desolation. She wanted someone, in the absence of the Confessor, to read the history of the Passion, and the "Prayers for the Dying;" but we were all too sensibly affected by her state to be able to give her this satisfaction. She offered this fresh sacrifice to God in silence, and made no further allusion to her request; but when a religious proposed to read some ejaculatory prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and some loving aspirations of the soul towards Him, she willingly acquiesced. After the reading had continued a short time, the Sister asked Mother

Vicereess if it fatigued her. She replied, "Go on, go on; it revives the past." Was she not perhaps thinking of those fervent transports of love she herself had formerly felt towards God? In the evening the doctor visited her, and told her to take a little drink. He gave it to her himself, but the stomach was too weak to retain it, and he saw the fearful sufferings which its effects produced. When the worst was over, he, wishing to encourage her, said, "You are certainly very ill, but it is possible your malady may take a favourable turn." The dying Sister said to him, "Death does not alarm me; it gives me no uneasiness. I have nothing to leave but a few rags. Doctor, I made my sacrifice in my youth; now it is nothing. I do not regret dying." These few words seemed to make a deep impression upon him, and he went away as much affected as edified. After the Confessor had given her the plenary Indulgence of some of the Congregations to which she belonged, she begged every one to go to bed, and remained alone with the two religious who had attended her throughout her agonising sufferings. Very early in the morning she sent for me, and asked permission to receive Holy Viaticum. A little Altar was soon prepared, and I told her that Jesus would be with her in a few minutes;

but that, if she wished it, the Confessor would enter first without the Community. "Yes, let him come," she replied, and then added: "Mother, I thank you again for all your tender charity towards me; may God grant you a hundred years of life, and even more, and console you as you console me." She took my hands and kissed them many times. She received the Sacramental Absolution each time the priest entered, that her soul might be pure before receiving her God. Then she prepared for the last visit of her Spouse, in whose eternal embrace she was to be received on the coming day. After Holy Communion she renewed her religious Profession and the act of her Espousals, then made a particular commendation of me, miserable creature that I am. . . . Our Father Confessor made her promise to pray for him, and for the present necessities of Holy Church. As it was time for the Community to receive Holy Communion he left the Enclosure to offer the Holy Sacrifice, promising, however, that he would return. Mother Vicaress begged him not to remain away long. I remained alone with her to receive her last wishes. I asked her if she were in need of anything. She replied, "I ask of you prayers, prayers, for my sufferings are at their climax. Ask the three Communities to

pray that I may have fortitude to bear all till my last sigh, and then that I may quickly be delivered from Purgatory. God will reward you all." I saw that the malady was gaining ground rapidly; her sufferings were intense, I could hardly bear to see her. My heart was ready to break, but as she had asked me not to leave her, I could not go away. She seemed to be dozing, then suddenly she exclaimed: "Ah! how painful to have you here and not be able to speak to you." I then told her a few things about myself, and she answered me: I do not mention them now, but later I may do so, if it should please God. Again I inquired if her interior state continued the same. She said that she was very desolate, but her conscience was quite at ease. She begged me to have candles lighted round the shrine of our Mother St. Clare, and to have the curtain withdrawn that the religious might go and pray to their holy Mother for her dying child. Her desires were granted. She seemed calmer, but her malady was almost at its height. Again she begged for prayers now and after death, that she might not be kept long away from God. She told me that her chest felt burning, while all the rest of her body was like ice, and nothing could warm it. Seeing her end approaching, I recommended

her to offer her torments to God for the salvation of souls, for many were being lost eternally, especially in France. . . . She faintly added that still greater calamities threatened France, Italy, and many persons consecrated to God. . . . "Ah, how little they think of it: all ought to lead better lives."

So the day passed wearily on, while she waited with a lively faith, an ardent charity, and a firm hope (founded on the merits of Jesus Christ) for the happy moment when she was to enter into possession of eternal glory. She received again the Absolutions in *articulo mortis*, making, however, her confession beforehand with great faith. She preserved her presence of mind up to the last, and was often heard to murmur, "My Jesus, when shall I be no more? Oh, let it be soon!" Towards the end she had lost all fear of judgment, and was perfectly calm. She was consumed with thirst, but could not drink. For three days she had taken nothing but the Blessed Sacrament, and it was certainly not a little remarkable that she had been able to retain the Sacred Species. The dropsy continued to make such rapid progress, that she could not be moved even with the aid of cushions, for fear of suffocation; she was, indeed, on the cross with her Crucified Jesus,

but her resignation was most beautiful to witness. About half-past nine in the evening she again made her confession, and thanked the Father for all his charity to her, promising to make him some return in heaven; she also begged him to convey her last wishes to her Sisters after her death. "Tell them," she said, "that I am most grateful to them for all the charity of which they have given me so many proofs, some by working for me, some by thoughtfulness, some by praying for me: all have done something for me. I will show them my gratitude when I am in heaven. I now feel as if I might venture to leave them three parting words of remembrance. Will you tell them that I recommend to them especially the exact observance of our Holy Rule, promptitude and fidelity in all Community exercises, and above all holy Charity—*i.e.*, bearing with one another like true Sisters; and I beg of all their charitable prayers."

Then I went back to her cell with the two assistants. We prayed aloud for some time, and about half-past eleven she begged us to go to bed. Not to distress her, the Father Confessor and I left her with two Sisters. About an hour after this, a violent attack came on. Placing the crucifix on her chest, she asked for the last blessing. When I went to her

she several times kissed my hand, which I had raised to bless her. As soon as the Confessor arrived she made her last confession, and received the Absolution of the Order; then some other prayers were said. She begged the reverend Father and myself not to leave her; she then took her crucifix in her hand, closed her eyes, and awaited in perfect consciousness that last moment which we plainly saw could not be far off. Whilst the Father Confessor recited the prayers for the dying, I remained close to this beloved child, who was about to leave me. Twice she raised my hand over her that I might bless her, and then pressed it to her dying lips. She seemed to have already lost all power of speech; but about two o'clock a kind of agitation came over her; she made an effort to speak, but her tongue was too much swollen; she wished to be alone with her Confessor. The interview lasted about half an hour; then several of us returned to assist at the last moments of our beloved Sister. She did not speak again, but she was conscious to the last. Her eyes were closed, and although her sufferings were most intense, a beautiful expression of perfect peace was visible upon her countenance. Her last words had been addressed to the Father Confessor. They were spoken with animation and

precision, and her sight was then clear and bright. We had remained in prayer about half an hour, when suddenly she gave a deep sigh. The reverend Father immediately raised his hands to heaven, and with lively faith said to her, "My child, if such be the good pleasure of God, offer yourself a victim to the Divine Will, and with the merit and in the name of obedience depart from this earth to go and enjoy your God in heaven." Then another still deeper sigh, and in the most perfect and profound peace, with a serene countenance, a smile upon her lips, without agony or even movement, she breathed forth her beautiful soul to God, at half-past two in the morning of Wednesday, the 1st of February, 1871, aged forty-seven years, more than twenty-five of which had been passed in religion. When the Holy Father granted her the plenary Indulgence in *articulo mortis* the preceding evening, at the request of her cousin, his Holiness said: "That soul is going straight to heaven."

She had said many times that she hoped not to remain long in Purgatory, and at the exact hour of her death, half-past two, she awoke several religious of our Convent, as also the four Superiors of the two other Communities, who of course did not know that she was dead, by loud knocking. About an hour after

Mother Vicaress's death, one of our Sisters saw a bright light in her cell. Very much astonished, she closed her eyes, then opened them again: the light was still there. After a short time it disappeared; then the thought occurred to her that Mother Vicaress might be dead. She arose, and soon learned that her conjecture was true. She immediately began to pray for the repose of this dead soul.

A few hours after death our holy Sister was laid out, according to the custom of the Order, by two religious, whose special veneration for the deceased had obtained for them this happy privilege; the countenance was beautifully serene, she appeared as if in a gentle slumber, and the whole body was flexible except the left hand, which continued to hold the Crucifix. She remained in the enclosure till 10 A.M., then she was placed in a coffin and taken to the Church outside the Convent, where she remained till evening. A great many Masses were offered for her in the course of the morning; several ecclesiastics, knowing her great sanctity, were deeply affected at our loss, and asked for something that had belonged to her to keep as a relic.

By virtue of the present laws, the corpse had to be taken to the common cemetery the same evening. It

remained unburied for five days while a suitable tomb was being prepared. An ecclesiastic profited by this delay to take her photograph; but it is not a good likeness, as the dropsy had disfigured her very much.

Numbers of persons eagerly gathered round to recommend themselves to her intercession. To satisfy their pious demands, we distributed a great many things which had formerly been used by the dear deceased, and this, indeed, we still continue to do. Before consigning the coffin to the earth, the body was examined and found flexible and free from all appearance of corruption; the grave was then closed provisionally, and as soon as the tombstone, bearing the initials of our Monastery, was ready, the grave was opened, and at my request the two workmen removed secretly the lid of the coffin, and found the deceased in the same state as when first interred, more than a month before, except that the tumefaction had greatly subsided, without, however, causing any unpleasant smell; the face was serene and of a natural colour. These two good men felt a particular satisfaction in doing this work, and a special spiritual grace was granted to one of them on this occasion, which impressed him so strongly in favour of the servant of God, that he recommended a poor woman who was suffering from

a bad knee to have recourse to her ; she did so, and applied to her knee a handkerchief that had been used by Mother Vicaress ; her confidence was rewarded by the limb being restored to its natural state.

Eight days after Mother Vicaress's death, during the solemn Mass which it is customary to offer for our deceased Sisters, at the moment the priest was ascending the Altar steps, a certain person, who had earnestly prayed the night before for some consolation from the Mother Vicaress, was transported out of herself and saw a great light upon the Altar, and in the midst stood one whom she did not immediately recognise, surrounded with lilies and roses. She looked attentively and discovered it to be, without a doubt, Mother Vicaress, clothed in the religious habit but all covered with violets, her eyes raised to heaven, and her hands crossed upon her bosom ; she seemed absorbed in God. . . . The person who was thus favoured felt herself inundated with a heavenly joy, and said : " Ah ! Mother Vicaress, is it you ? I entreat you to tell me something for the good of my soul." . . Then she seemed to hear a voice saying to her : " Do you not see that she is lost in God ? She cannot speak to you, because she is plunged in heavenly delights."

This person then understood that Mother Vicaress was already in Paradise. She prayed for herself and for others, but particularly that the miserable and unworthy religious who writes these lines might have strength to fulfil the duties which God has imposed upon her. At the end of the Mass, she saw Mother Vicaress turn her eyes gently and lovingly upon her, and then with a sweet smile she disappeared.

On the 5th of June, a certain religious was much distressed at having committed a slight fault : that is, for not having corresponded to grace ; the fault was a venial one, but nevertheless it troubled her very much. However, as she could not go to confession, she retired to rest with the intention of seeking absolution the next day, and having recommended herself to Mother Vicaress and asked her to obtain her pardon from God, she went to sleep. About break of day, she heard Mother Vicaress call her, just as she had been wont to do in life ; she immediately answered : “ Dear sister, do help me that I may not only be saved, but may become a saint.” Then, in a calm but somewhat serious tone, Mother Vicaress told her that the life of one consecrated to God ought to be one of continual and universal mortification. That austerities were not necessary, but

mortification was indispensable. That it should be accompanied with humility, which must be united to a most exact obedience ; and that obedience must not be separated from an ardent, elevated, and sublime charity towards God and our neighbour, and great fidelity in the accomplishment of the duties of our state. . . . "All this," she said, "becomes easy, if we keep ourselves in the presence of God, as though we could see Him with our bodily eyes. . . . This practice of the presence of God inflames the soul with an ardent love for God, capable of overturning all the obstacles which the devil can put in our way. It is a short road to the acquisition of all virtues, and above all, that grace of intimate union with God to which all religious should aspire." The religious had listened to all with the greatest attention, and as she rose from her bed, for it was now time, she renewed her intention of approaching the Sacrament of Penance, when she heard these words: "Make a firm resolution of never again offending a God of love, Who alone deserves to be loved ; try to act always with a pure and upright intention to please Jesus alone, your Divine Spouse. Be full of charity towards your neighbour ; but let it be a well-ordered charity. Love everyone in God, with God, for God and in company with God,

Who is always present on account of the great love He bears you." Then, bringing to her remembrance certain faults into which she had sometimes fallen, she said: "How could you offend Infinite Charity?" She then added some warnings, and concluded with these words: "Never lose confidence in God; but, on the other hand, never cease to fear and tremble at the judgments of God, for those who are consecrated to God are judged with great rigour. Oh, terrible are His judgments!" The religious who heard these things, says it would be impossible to describe her feelings at the time: but that certainly the impression these words produced will never be forgotten by her.

Several of our sisters have received spiritual favours through the invocation of our beloved Mother Vicar-ess; and one of them asserts that she has recourse to her in all her necessities, and is always heard. Another religious says that Mother Vicaress warns her by a shake when she is about to commit some fault; this puts her on her guard; she recollects herself, and is thus preserved from many shortcomings.

A certain person was one day praying for the necessities of the times, when it seemed to her that she saw Mother Vicaress raised in the air; she was clothed in white, and her whole person was enveloped

in a costly veil. Turning her eyes towards this person, she said to her : “ Numerous, indeed, are they who wish for the Holy Father’s death, but the most Blessed Virgin Mary has always protected him ; his sufferings are not yet over, because the holy city is infested by hordes of wicked spirits, who cause God’s ministers and all good Catholics to suffer a great deal, and many and grievous are the sins committed. These things wound the paternal heart of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and increase his sufferings ; but in return for all he will have a great reward.” Then this person recommended to Mother Vicaress her own family who were in Rome ; to this she said, “ I do not forget those who are united to me by the bonds of the flesh, and still less those who were, and are still, united to me by the bonds of the Spirit.” A religious was one day intending to offer the Stations of the Cross for the repose of Mother Vicaress’s soul, but at the first Station she inhaled so delicious a perfume, and was filled with such an indescribable joy, that she felt quite assured that this dear soul was already in heaven. A few days after Mother Vicaress’s death her cell was assigned to a certain Sister who went there, with a good will it is true, to accomplish the orders of obedience, but with a strong natural repugnance, being of a very

timid nature. However, she recommended herself to the deceased, and all fear left her, so that she fell asleep; when she awoke in the night she smelt a delicious perfume, and felt an indescribable contentment. The next day the same phenomenon occurred; the scent was even stronger, and seemed to proceed from some one who was moving about the room. It was perceived a third time, on the following Thursday—a day which our dear Sister had always held in special veneration. Even the objects which Mother Vicaress had for her use during life often sent forth a delicious smell, which for its exquisite delicacy I cannot compare to any other perfume.

A certain religious had asked Mother Vicaress to obtain for her a spiritual grace; but after praying a long time she grew impatient, and said interiorly: “O blessed soul, do obtain for me this favour, or I shall be inclined to think you not in heaven.” When one evening, kneeling down in her cell to say some prayers, according to custom, she was surprised and troubled at seeing some one near her, for she had not heard the door opened. Then this person said to her: “Yes, I am in heaven, I enjoy my God, and this for all eternity. When I was in the world I used to wish I could love Him as the Blessed do in heaven, but

this was impossible ; now, however, I am satisfied, after having for many years suffered this ardent desire, so intolerable for a feeble creature. Oh, if you could but know what it is to enjoy God and to possess Him eternally ! Would you reach the land where I am ? then love God very much. You know that love goes hand in hand with a perfect life. Then try to begin a new life, a perfect life, and love will follow in its train. Have an ardent desire for, and seek earnestly after, union with God ; and, by dint of being always in the presence of God, Divine love will be enkindled in your heart : this celestial fire will purify your soul and consume all earthly affections. Then will it take its flight towards God, and begin even here below the life of the Blessed in heaven. But you must be generous and persevering, and Divine grace will not be wanting to you. Remember that to be united to God in time and in eternity you must keep yourself in the presence of God, and have a great desire to love Him very much." She who received this favour acquired an immense confidence in the intercession of the dear deceased, and has recourse to her in all her necessities.

Another religious asked Mother Vicarress to obtain for her a spiritual grace, upon which, as she asserts,

her very salvation might depend. She began a triduum, and on the first day felt a strong inspiration telling her what God required of her, but she was unfaithful in corresponding with this first grace; however, she continued to pray, when one day she heard herself called by her name; seeing no one near she looked about, but could discern no one; the next day the same voice called her, still she could see no one; but the third day she plainly recognised that it was Mother Vicaress's voice, and at the same time felt strongly urged to correspond to the designs of God in her regard, and formed a generous resolution to be faithful to the end; and has now a firm hope of sanctifying herself by the aid of our own dear Mother Vicaress.

Another religious, on the eve of the anniversary of her holy Profession, had recommended herself most earnestly to the deceased, that she might obtain her virtues, particularly her love of God, and had asked for a sign by which to know that her prayer was heard. She went to her cell at night without thinking of the request she had made; standing just ready to get into bed she heard distinctly a knocking at her door, she hastened to open it, thinking it was one of the religious, but seeing no one, she felt that it was

Mother Vicaress, and immediately thanked her for giving her this sign. At another time, having prayed for a certain spiritual favour for a long time, she said to Mother Vicaress: "Blessed soul, I fear that I am not worthy to obtain the grace I ask, but if the goodness of God will grant my request let such a sick Sister have a good night." And the sufferer slept well.

A young Sister who was very ill, being one night in more pain than usual, begged of our dear Mother Vicaress to obtain for her the grace of a little sleep, at the same time putting round her neck a medal that had formerly been worn by the deceased. Her pains immediately ceased, and she passed a quiet night.

Many other persons have reported to us the graces and favours and miraculous cures obtained by the intercession of this great Mother of God, the veneration for whom increases daily. But not to weary my readers, I will relate them in an appendix, as they may be valuable in evidence hereafter.

APPENDIX.

Further Graces obtained by the Merits of the Servant of God, Sister Mary Cherubina Clare of St. Francis Saraceni.

FRANCES CIANETTI was suffering from sciatica so that she could not move in bed, but, recommending herself to the servant of God, the pain ceased instantly : she rose quite well, and has continued so ever since.

Madame Gertrude Saraceni had, for a long time, been unable to sleep, and her nervous system suffered so much in consequence that she could not remain in bed, but passed the nights pacing about in sheer restlessness ; nervous contractions of her whole body had even become frequent ; the most eminent medical men of Rome had been consulted in vain. But hardly had the patient placed upon her head a cap of our beloved deceased than she fell into a refreshing sleep, her malady disappeared, and she has enjoyed perfect health ever since.

Ursula Bossini recommended herself to the servant of God that she might be spared a painful operation ; a triduum was made by the community to thank the Most Holy Trinity for the graces conferred upon Mother Vicaress, and a piece of linen which she had made use of was given to the sufferer. During the triduum I reminded the dear deceased of the obedience she had always paid me during life, and begged her to do the same now by obtaining the desired grace. At the very same moment, as we afterwards learned, a change took place which was deemed by all miraculous ; and the lady is now quite well.

A little boy of ten years old was restored to health by similar means, although he had already received the Last Sacraments and his parents were weeping round him, when his aunt brought and placed upon the dying child a cap which Mother Vicaress had worn. Immediately opening his eyes he called for his father, and in a few days was perfectly restored to health.

Dame Mary Teresa Magroni, a Benedictine religious of St. Gemina, had been suffering violent pains for a long time, and had quite lost her voice. She prayed several times to Mother Vicaress that she might be

able to resume her Choir duties. Her prayers were heard, for she quite recovered her health and voice, and is now able to go to Choir and to perform all her other duties.

Sister Mary Gertrude Philomena Eleodori, a Poor Clare of the convent of St. Restitutus at Narni, had been suffering for more than a month from some internal affection which caused her to experience so great a disgust for food that the very smell of it brought on sickness. On the evening of the 5th of August her sufferings being more intense than usual, she asked the infirmarian for a piece of linen which had formerly been used by Mother Vicaress. She applied it to the suffering part; in a few instants all pain had ceased. She passed a good night, took her breakfast without inconvenience, and suffered but little after dinner; from which time she has continued free from all pain, and is now quite well.

Mr. M. Alessandri, an inhabitant of this town, was attacked in the month of August with a malady in the lungs. As he was already 75 years old, fears were entertained for his life; but a piece of linen which had belonged to the servant of God was applied to his chest. Gradually the malady subsided, and soon he was restored to health.

One of our Sisters, who is now dead, experienced in a very sensible manner the protection of Mother Vicaress. She was very holy, much given to prayer, and inflamed with the love of God in a very special manner. She had begged of the servant of God that this flame might be increased. Her prayer was certainly heard, for afterwards she was often quite beside herself, and unconscious of what was said and done around her. Once, unable to resist the violence of Divine love, she was heard to exclaim : "Mother Vicaress, what are you doing?" Her prayer was indeed granted, for she could no longer resist the force of Divine love. When she enjoyed these sweet favours she was careful to conceal herself, lest anything should transpire calculated to draw praise or even attention upon her. She was often warned of the presence of Mother Vicaress either by a noise or a sweet perfume or in some other way, and about a week before she was attacked with her last illness, Mother Vicaress visited her, inviting her in a most tender way to come and join her in heaven.

Another of our Sisters had prayed to the servant of God for a long time that she would obtain for her the graces necessary for making a good meditation. At last, somewhat weary, perhaps, that her petition re-

mained unanswered, she addressed Mother Vicaress in the following way: "My dear Mother Vicaress, I see that you do not grant my request: I know very well that I am unworthy of it, yet I entreat of you, for the love of God, do teach me yourself, though it were only in a dream, how to pray." The following night she seemed to see the servant of God, who said to her: "If you wish to be heard when you pray, put before your mind the greatness of God and your own baseness; humbling yourself thus you will be sure to be heard."

A religious of the third order of our seraphic Father St. Francis had for several years suffered from some malady in the throat, so that she could never take any solid food, and was moreover incapable of digesting anything fat, such as oil, broth, etc., but having recommended herself to the servant of God, and placed on her throat a crucifix which had formerly been used by Mother Vicaress, she was soon quite cured.

Another religious, tormented by interior troubles which she had borne patiently for many years, saw herself, to her great joy, entirely freed from them after making a triduum to the Most Holy Trinity that by the merits of the servant of God she might once more enjoy peace.

We have received the following details from a venerable ecclesiastic : “ On the evening of the 23rd August I was plunged in the greatest distress because a certain ill-disposed man, from a distant province of Italy, had come to my parish of Monte Verde with intent to carry out some unjust proceedings, and I was to meet him the following day. It is true the affair in no way concerned me, but this fellow hoped through the license of the times to gain his end, and to take a violent revenge on me. I knew the man; my home was in a solitary place, I lived alone with my sister, and other circumstances seemed to favour an attack; moreover, the time was too short for me to take any human measures for my security. I therefore turned towards our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, earnestly conjuring Him, by the merits of His beloved spouse, Sister Mary Cherubina Clare, to deliver me from the snares of this wicked man. I then went to sleep. The next morning the man was seized with an unaccountable terror; not only he dared not use violence, but he kept at a distance from my house. After a short time passed in a state of indecision, he determined to desist, and left the parish; but in a few days he fell into the hands of justice. Now, I cannot

but see in all these circumstances a wonderful intervention of Divine providence in consideration of the merits of the servant of God whom I had invoked."

Paulina Fabrizi, twenty years of age, residing in Rome, was dangerously ill with heart disease, but was unwilling to submit to the severe treatment the medical men judged necessary in order to avert death. However, hearing of the saintly life of Sister Mary Cherubina Clare, she conceived a great devotion towards her, devoutly kissed her picture, wore a little piece of stuff that this holy religious had used, and recommended herself to her with a lively faith which was quickly rewarded; she is now in perfect health and quite free from any palpitation.

Mrs. Clare N—— had a baby of six months old, so ill, thin, and wretched, that it was always screaming day and night. The poor mother could hardly bear the sight of the child; but one night she recommended it to the prayers of Mother Vicarress, and placed upon the baby a piece of linen which had belonged to the servant of God. The little creature immediately fell asleep, and grew rapidly better. He is now in perfect health.

A certain person who knew Sister Mary Cherubina Clare, received from her the following communication

during Mass : “ These are the precious moments for the human race. Divine mercy holds back the arm of justice, that justice so grievously outraged by the multitude of enormous sins which men commit. But this holy sacrifice restrains justice. You are now on Calvary, where all of us were redeemed by the Passion and Death of the Divine Saviour. Ask Jesus for blood—His Blood, all of which He shed for the salvation of our souls. Unite yourself to the priest in offering this Divine Victim and His precious Blood.” At this moment the priest consecrated, and from the elevation to the Communion, the soul of the Blessed remained in profound adoration. Then she continued: “ What tears I shed, what pain I suffered because of unworthy priests! True I did not know them personally, but I was transported in spirit to different places, and was made to see that many priests dared to celebrate with grievous sins upon their consciences. Oh, what an outrage they commit against God! Willingly would I have cast myself into the midst of a fiery furnace to prevent so great an evil. If obedience had allowed me I should have afflicted my body and loaded myself with penances. As it was, I never ceased to implore the mercy of God on behalf of these unfortunate

priests. Ah, many times it seemed to me I should die of grief, and, in truth, my life was shortened by the anguish I felt at the sight of the outrages perpetrated against God by His own children, and especially by His sacred ministers. It is now your duty to aid these poor souls." The person to whom these words were addressed replied courageously: "Would to God that I could promote the salvation of souls." "Then Mother Vicaress continued: "Make known to all Catholics that God wills that His priests should lead more holy lives, for, although many of them are in the grace of God, yet even they approach the holy Altar with extraordinary coldness, and as if it were an every-day thing. It was not thus that Jesus went to Calvary! He went with a burning love, and priests should offer the Holy Sacrifice with a pure conscience, an immaculate heart, and a lively faith; let them present this Divine Victim to the Eternal Father for the salvation of souls, and especially for the conversion of so many scandalous and apostate priests. They are the crying evil of these days: yet the arms of Jesus are open to receive them. Let them ask of our merciful Jesus, by the merits of His precious Blood, the grace of conversion for these unhappy men, and they will surely obtain this favour when they hold the Divine

Victim in their hands. Make known that God is about to send other terrible chastisements upon the world; but they will be lessened if priests offer worthily the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Do not delay to make known all that I have told you."

Sister Mary Vincent Vigorelli, a Dominicaness, relates in these terms a favour she has obtained by the intercession of Mother Vicaress:—"I was suffering in my throat; I had great difficulty in speaking, so that I could hardly satisfy my obligation of reciting the Divine Office in Choir; moreover, I felt myself getting so weak that I did not expect to live much longer, when one Sunday, it being my turn to read in the refectory, I recommended myself to the servant of God, Sister Mary Cherubina Clare, reciting one Pater and three Gloria Patri's in honour of the Most Holy Trinity, and in thanksgiving for the favours bestowed upon this devout religious. Immediately I was able to read in my natural tone, and continued to do so for three quarters of an hour. The Superioress asked me if I were tired. I replied, 'No.' Finding myself so speedily heard, I recommended to this holy soul a spiritual intention which had caused me anxiety for the previous eight months. This petition also was

granted, and I may add that Sister Mary Cherubina Clare comes to my aid whenever I ask her."

The following accounts were sent to the translator from Assisi, in the month of March, 1874 :—

In the Name of God. Amen.

I, the undersigned, certify, to the greater glory of God and for the sake of truth, that for fifteen months I had been suffering with a spasmodic nervous affection, accompanied with disease of the heart, so that I had to keep my bed sometimes for a week, sometimes for a fortnight, and even for a whole month at a time. The malady, which weakened me very much, had been unusually violent for thirty-six days, when, on the 2nd of August, 1872, the medical man said that I was in danger of dying at any moment. Whilst I lay exhausted with suffering, and in fear of sudden death, a picture of Sister Mary Cherubina Clare was unexpectedly presented to me; it was the 5th of September of the same year. I recommended myself to her with great confidence, begging her to pray to the most Holy Virgin to obtain my cure, and promising to go to Assisi to make the acquaintance of the Mother Superioress of that place if this favour were granted me. Three days afterwards I was able to

leave my bed, and gradually I recovered my health. In September, 1873, I fulfilled my promise, and never since then have I been subject to this terrible malady.

AGATHA DI PAOLA,	{	All witness to the truth of the above account.
MARY CELESTINE DI PAOLA,		
PETER DI PAOLA,		

CASTEL S. PIETRO, 18th Feb., 1874.

For several days in January, 1873, I felt a slight pain in my side, but I was able to attend to my ordinary duties. One Sunday morning, however, after suffering more than usual during the night from spasms, I got partly out of bed, but was unable to stand or get back into bed. I called for help; some of my Sisters quickly came and put me back into bed. Mother Superioress sent for the doctor, who, both then and at his second visit in the evening, declared it to be sciatica, and ordered me to be rubbed: but nothing gave me any relief, and the spasms continued to increase. Suddenly the Sister who was with me remembered that she had a little piece of Sister Mary Cherubina Clare's veil; she put it on me, and recited three times the Pater, Ave, and Gloria to the Most Holy Trinity, that, by the merits of this great servant of God, I might be cured. I soon fell asleep, but

waking shortly after, I tried to move my foot ; finding that I could do so, I began to move my whole body, which I did as if nothing had been the matter with me, though before I could not move without the assistance of three or four Sisters. From that moment I have not felt any more of this pain, and am able to walk without difficulty.

SISTER GERTRUDE BIANCHI,
Convent of St. Clare, Cortona.

In the Name of God. Amen.

ROME, 5th Nov., 1873.

I, the undersigned, Anne Catherine Pascucci, was at Assisi on the 3rd of last July, intending to visit the holy Portiuncola of St. Francis, and had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Sister Mary Celestine of St. Stanislaus, a professed religious of the Convent of St. Clare. Profiting by this favourable occasion, I recommended myself to her prayers, in order to obtain that I might be spared a terrible operation which I was destined to undergo for an excrescence in my mouth. She immediately told me of one of her religious Sisters, who two years before had died in the odour of sanctity, and advised me to recommend myself to her, telling me that many

miracles had already been worked through her intercession. At the same time she had the charity to bestow upon me a piece of the veil of this holy religious, Sister Mary Cherubina Clare of St. Francis by name, telling me to put it into my mouth, and at the same time to ask the Most Holy Trinity to deliver me, through the merits of this great servant of God, from the above-mentioned operation. The next day I had no sooner put the piece of veil in my mouth than the grace was granted. I repeat it—a prodigious change took place immediately, and I have been spared the operation. I certify this fact in testimony of the truth, and at the request of the religious of the venerable Monastery of St. Clare.

ANNE CATHERINE PASCUCCI.

A deplorable spirit of discord had arisen between husband and wife in a certain Christian family, whose name, through respect, I pass over in silence. For many years this couple had been much attached to each other, but for more than a twelvemonth this happy harmony had ceased to exist. Speaking to a confidential friend, they both expressed themselves deeply concerned and afflicted; nevertheless, it was quite impossible to reconcile them, although the great

injury they did their numerous offspring was vividly put before them. These unhappy circumstances became known to one of their relations, and caused her much sorrow, but she immediately felt confident of obtaining the grace of their reconciliation by the intercession of the servant of God, Sister Mary Cherubina Clare. She therefore began a novena to the Most Holy Trinity, praying most humbly that peace and tranquillity might once more be restored to that family, and saying with great confidence: "This is a purely spiritual grace; O dear Sister Cherubina, do obtain it, for Charity's sake; and I promise to make it known for the greater glory of God and of yourself." When the novena was ended, she still continued to pray, for, as she lived a long way off, she only knew later that the long-desired re-union had taken place at the time of her novena, though the parties themselves did not know how their reconciliation had been effected.

CLARE COLUMBA CHIAROMANNI certifies that the above is true.

Eugenia Mencaroni, a baby of a few months old, was attacked by small-pox of a most virulent description. She was in a high state of fever, and covered with

pustules. The medical man despaired of her life; she refused her milk, and was quite delirious. Two persons had already died of the disease in the same house, and no hope was entertained for the child, when, on the 10th of May, its mother found a small piece of a veil that had been worn by Sister Mary Cherubina Clare. She put it in a little milk, which the child drank, and was instantly better. It continued to take food during the night; in the morning the fever had disappeared, the pustules dried up without leaving any scars, and a bright colour returned to the little one's face.

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